

THE CHALLENGES FACING THE MIDWEST/ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION,
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY,
AMONG AMERICAN AND IMMIGRANT CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-project, *The Challenges Facing the Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region, Church of God of Prophecy, Among American and Immigrant Churches*, addresses the various challenges the Church of God of Prophecy is facing in America. This project is research not just to elaborate on the present reality but to bring to the forefront the good points that need to be discussed among both groups, American and immigrant church groups in America. This thesis-project compares the various challenges causing the demise of the English church in America, as well as the cause or factor in the immigrant church in America that is causing it to grow exponentially. The purpose of this writing is to ascertain what can be done to insert into the English church the same desire as the immigrant church to grow the kingdom of God while yet growing the local church. It is my desire to be able to apply this research in the area where I supervise as well as pass on these findings to the supervisors who are my co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord in my same capacity and beyond.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

In the Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region of the Church of God of Prophecy, we are facing a challenging situation, in that many of the American churches are dying while the immigrant church in its difficult position is thriving. The challenge is, what can we do about stopping the American churches' slow demise and help the immigrant church to assimilate¹ without attaining some of the negative attributes that could be connected to the demise of the American church? We want our immigrant church to thrive in America, but not at the cost of its own destruction, just as we want our American churches to rekindle the same desire for church as the immigrant.

That is a tremendous situation we face in our region, yet in the research for this thesis-project, information and statistics indicate that the problem is happening not only in the Church of God of Prophecy (COGOP) but also in several other denominations. This research will help us in our region to ascertain what ingredient in the thriving churches is lacking in the churches that are not thriving and even dwindling. It is important to this study to attempt to ascertain the cause of our American churches dying away. The goal is not to glorify one group's gains so that the others will look bad or the

¹ Webster's dictionary defines assimilation as "the process whereby a group, as of minority or immigrant peoples, gradually adopts the characteristics of another culture." Assimilation is a good thing at times and in some situations. The immigrant who comes to the United States wants to have all things that we Americans do. There are some things to which immigrants should assimilate, but not to the church in America. Learning the English language and being able to live in American society in peace and harmony are some points of assimilation.

gainers look good and flaunt it, but that through this writing, we can help each other in the promulgation of the gospel in these United States of America.

The Problem in Its Setting

The Church of God of Prophecy is an international Holiness-Pentecostal organization with presence in about “135 nations of the world at present with a membership of about 1,044,586 members, around the world, with less than 10% of that membership being in the United States of America, including Canada.”² We are an ethnically diverse church, with leaders who represent our worldwide constituency. Yet, we are still a church that struggles with borders, language, culture, ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic differences.

The Barna Group statistics on the views Americans have about immigrants show some of the reasons why the people of the immigrant church have such great challenges to overcome. When American adults were asked “whether they believe immigrants and refugees take jobs from Americans,” seven out of ten conservatives (70%) either strongly or somewhat agree with this statement compared with one quarter of liberals (27%).³ Note that the great majority of the conservatives were evangelicals.

Churches across America, according to the statistics, are having a drop in their church attendance and in their church membership. The problem I address in this thesis-project has to do with the growth difference of our churches in my area of ministry, the Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region (MW/RM), which includes Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa,

² DeWayne Hamby, ed., *Church of God of Prophecy 99th International General Assembly Journal* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2016), 192.

³ Barna Group. *Barna Trends 2017: What's New and What's Next at the Intersection of Faith and Culture*, ed. Roxanne Stone (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 36.

and Minnesota, among the American churches and the immigrant churches. Church growth and lack of it in the United States has a well-documented trail, mapped by several institutions of statistical research. In this project, several will be noted, quoted, and mentioned.

In *Barna Trends 2017*, one finds the following statistics on church attendance in America:

In 2000, almost 6 in 10 adults (58%) had attended church in the past month. In 2015, that number had decreased to 46%, a difference of 12 percentage points. In 1986, Barna began tracking church attendance, back then, nearly half (48%) reported going to a church service in the past week. That number has declined and climbed over the years but has recently trended downward to its lowest point yet (35%).⁴

The North American COGOP, whose majority membership is in the so-called Bible Belt of the United States, is keeping its numbers moving slowly. Tennessee, for example, “in 2006 according to our 94th International Assembly Minutes, had 7,202 members with 130 churches, then in the 95th Minutes, the membership increased to 7,995 yet dropped in churches to 128.”⁵

The reason for mentioning this is that Barna’s book on trends states that “Chattanooga, Tennessee, ranks first in church attendance; sixty-three percent of its population went to church in the past week, making it the most church city, while in San Francisco, sixty-one percent have not been to church in the past six months, making it the most unchurched city.”⁶

Even as their numbers decline, American Christians—like the U.S. population as a whole—are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Non-Hispanic

⁴ Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 139, 148.

⁵ The Church of God of Prophecy, *Church of God of Prophecy International General Assembly Minutes*, ed. Virginia E. Chatham (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2006), 261.

⁶ Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 149.

whites now account for smaller shares of evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants and Catholics than they did seven years earlier, while Hispanics have grown as a share of all three religious groups. Racial and ethnic minorities now make up 41% of Catholics (up from 35% in 2007), 24% of evangelical Protestants (up from 19%) and 14% of mainline Protestants (up from 9%).

Mega-churches, with their professional entertainment, television productions, and paid staff that produce classes and materials which are geared to minister to the family, continue to expand. This is one of the many challenges the small to average-size church faces in America today, as the ability to compete is not a reachable goal for most. Many of our churches in the MW/RM region are swiftly fading into the shadows of the mega-churches around them. Of course, it is not difficult to understand why this is happening.

These are but a few of the challenges that small to average-size churches face, while the immigrant church faces some of the same issues and yet grows. What can be the answer for this dilemma, and what can be done to stop the demise of American churches? What ingredients from the immigrant churches' growth will help to affect the American church?⁸

Included in this chapter are definitions of words which are pertinent to this presentation:

Diaspora, according to the American Heritage dictionary, refers to people who have moved from their homeland and take up residence elsewhere, either internally or internationally, because of war, persecution and other evil forces.

The diaspora people share a certain collective cultural consciousness, group

⁷ Gregory Smith, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, May 12, 2015, 200.

⁸ The phrase "the American church" includes the Anglo-Saxon American church, the Hispanic American church, and the African American church.

identity, memory of the homeland, and some kind of social solidarity in the host country. They have their cultural identity and seek to maintain it.

Immigration is defined by Webster's dictionary "the act of immigrating, coming to a country for the purpose of permanent residence."

In the early 1980s, Neil Diamond sang "America," which details a message of the many peoples coming to America from all over the world. This song encapsulates a prophetic past, present, and future of what not only America is going through, but also our church and all churches in the United States and Canada. In the MW/RM region, we have American churches, or better said, English-speaking churches, slowly dissipating, while many of the immigrant churches of any language are thriving almost as soon as they touch ground here. What this thesis-project would like to bring out is the ingredient that causes the immigrant church to grow and the ingredient that is lacking in the American church that is causing its demise. The historical findings of this project that focus on the church in America since its founding will prove to be insightful as a foundational basis for this thesis-project. The research includes the inception of the church in America by both the Spaniards in the 1500s and English immigrants in the 1600s. The Anglo-Saxon church began with immigrants coming from Europe on the eastern side of the country, while on the southwestern side, the church was begun by the Spanish conquistadors with the Roman Catholic priests and the many believers they brought. In addition, this project deals with immigrants in general, documented or not. This research is about church growth patterns which involve immigrants; documentation of citizenship or residence does not have a place in the church, since the kingdom of God

has no borders. That is what brings us to the thought of the immigrant church and its growth patterns in relation to or comparison with to the American church.

Immigration and Diaspora

English Immigration

In 1606 The London Company's settlement at Jamestown became the first permanent English Colony in North America. A charter was drawn up and finalized with the seal of King James I, and it was a legal proclamation of both the mission and purpose for both the Jamestown and the Plymouth Company Settlements. Its main stated purpose was:

We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of His divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian religion to such people, as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government; DO, by these our letters, Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended desires.⁹

According to historian David Barton, one of the main reasons for immigration from England to the North American continent was religious persecution when Queen Elizabeth I of England was head of both state and church. Reverend John Greenwood (1556–1593), who was the pastor of the Pilgrims in England, asserted that “there could be but one head to the Church and that head was not the Queen, but Christ! And was eventually executed for denying Her Majesty's ecclesiastical supremacy and attacking the existing ecclesiastical order.”¹⁰

⁹ David Barton, *The Founders' Bible: The Origin of the Dream of Freedom*. Brad Cummins, gen. ed., and Lance Wubbels, ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Shiloh Road Publishers, 2012), 34-35.

¹⁰ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 685.

“As religious persecution continued in England, by King James I, a group of about 100 English separatists, known to history as the “Pilgrims” fled England.”¹¹ Each group settled in various areas of the 13 colonies with more immigrants coming to the New World to live in a land to freely worship their Creator, and Savior Jesus Christ! This group of immigrants came with the purpose of planting a church: “Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian Faith and Honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern part of Virginia.”¹²

The number of immigrants who came to North America was not a small one; all across Europe, people began taking advantage of the opportunity to live free from religious oppression:

About a decade after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, 20,000 Puritans also fled England after many received life sentences (or had their noses slit, ears cut off, or a brand placed on their foreheads) for not adhering to the State-Mandated Anglican teachings.

Others coming to America for similar reasons included Jews facing the inquisition in Portugal (1654); Quakers fleeing England after some 10,000 had been imprisoned or tortured (1680); Anabaptists (Mennonites, Moravians, Dunkers, etc.) persecuted in Germany (1683); 40,000 Bible-believing Huguenots persecuted in France (1685); 20,000 Lutherans expelled from Austria (1731); etc.¹³

“Revivals swept through the American colonies between 1730 and the 1770s. The earliest manifestation of revival, known as the First Great Awakening, appeared among Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The Reverend William Tennant, a Scots-Irish immigrant, initiated a seminary to train clergymen originally called “The Log College,” now known as Princeton University. The great evangelists of that era used by

¹¹ Eugene Resnick, *Barron's AP United States History* (Brooklyn, NY: Barron's, 2012), 40.

¹² Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 187.

¹³ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 686.

God were the Reverend Gilbert Tennent, the Reverend Jonathan Edwards, and the Reverend George Whitfield.”¹⁴

The first Christians who escaped to America were enthusiastic about their faith and the God they served. Yet, for children of these first pilgrims, Christianity took second place to prosperity and business. When Edwards began preaching in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1734, he stated “the town experienced a degenerate time, with dullness of religion. The young people were very much addicted to night walking, and frequenting the taverns, and lewd practices, wherein some by example, exceedingly corrupted others. So, Edwards began to preach the gospel deliberately and powerfully in a sermon series on “Justification by Faith Alone.”¹⁵

Hispanic Immigration

In a history lessons I remember, colonization had already begun in Texas, Florida, and New Mexico before the English landed in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. If the numbers are correct, a Spanish expedition that landed in Florida, searching for the fountain of youth, founded what is now the city of St. Augustine about forty-two years before the founding of Jamestown, and about fifty-five years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts, making St. Augustine the oldest permanent European settlement on the North American continent. In 1598 New Mexico had become the largest and oldest Spanish settlement in the Southwest. According to the World Book encyclopedia (1982), “Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, an early explorer and first historian of Texas, was born in Jerez de la Frontera, an Andalusian province in the south of Spain

¹⁴ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 555-58.

¹⁵ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 553.

near Cádiz. The precise year of Cabeza de Vaca's birth cannot be determined, but it was within the 'birth window' of 1487–92.”

The American Church

What is the reason behind such a drastic decline in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ in America? It is not easy to ascertain the reason this is happening, but on the basis of my many years of ministry in the United States I see many reasons that may contribute to this decline.

I recently attended a local church within our denomination, and it saddened me to see the great disconnect they have with the world of today. They are still living in the 1970s, when that church could have been in its heyday, or as they say, “the spirit of the Lord was ever so present.” Pentecostal terminology is sometimes depressing and disenchanting when one hears aged and matured Christians make a declaration of the nature in which they saw God move and possibly believe he is no longer moving, or worse, no longer as great a God as he was when they were younger. In an excerpt from a sermon by Aimee Semple McPherson, she says, “Here bring your sins, He’ll wash them away. Here bring your sicknesses, He’ll heal you today. We serve not a dead God but a living God; not ‘I was’ but ‘The Great I am!’”¹⁶

Another factor that contributes to the decline of church attendance in America is the lack of commitment some members place on their participation or attendance in that particular church's life, which in essence is growth. While some people discard numbers as a carnal way of looking at church, New Testament writers mention numbers in

¹⁶ Vinson Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 134.

attendance in several passages of Scripture. The New Testament writers often cited a number of disciples (Mark 3:13-19), or believers (Acts 1:15; 1 Corinthians 5:3-8), or even the crowds to stress the point they wanted to make.

The Anglo-Saxon American Church

Thom Rainer, a Southern Baptist researcher and president of Lifeway Bookstores, writes that “between 8,000 and 10,000 churches would likely close in 2013.”¹⁷ It seems that there is a difference of opinion on this subject, as church statistician Ed Stetzer wrote an article titled “The State of the Church in America: Hint: It’s Not Dying. Is the American church really dying?”¹⁸ He tells us that the church is in transition, and not dying. So, we in America do have a dual-sided vision in regard to the state of the church, even by those who study statistics.

In COGOP, I see that many of our Anglo-Saxon American English churches are slowly dying away. I realize that this is a bold statement, one that I would rather not make, nevertheless, at some point in ministry, reality has to hit home. In my area of ministry alone, I have had seven Anglo-Saxon American churches die and have to be resurrected as another language group. And the ones that are operating now are slowly losing their attendance. If it were not for their buildings being leased out, they could not keep their doors open.

Often, we define church growth by whether a few congregations are growing,

¹⁷ Thom Rainer, “13 Issues for Churches in 2013,” ChurchLeaders, January 15, 2013, accessed August 22, 2017, <http://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/164787-thom-rainer-13-issues-churches-2013.html>.

¹⁸ Ed Stetzer, “The State of the Church in America: Hint: It’s Not Dying,” October 1, 2013, The Exchange, accessed January 25, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/october/state-of-american-church.html>.

rather than looking at the overall church in the nation. It is easy to point to certain mega-churches and imagine that North America is exploding with church growth. Statistics, however, point to another reality. I have visited Lakewood Church, a mega-church in Houston, Texas, several times and this has proven to me that if they had no varied ethnic attendance, their attendance would be lower than it is presently. When one views the services of tele-evangelists, and the camera scans across the sanctuary, one sees the greater number of attendees to be black, Asian, and Hispanic, with a very low, scattered number of whites.

The reality is that there is an overall decline of church growth in North America—even though some mega churches are exploding. Tom Clegg and Warren Bird say, “The explosion of mega churches and other fast-growing congregations has masked the impact of an overall discouraging and negative trend: In the past fifty years, U.S. churches have failed to gain an additional 2 percent of the American population.”¹⁹

The Hispanic American Church

Time (April 2013) has on its cover, “The Latino Explosion,” and it features a Chicago pastor who leads a twenty-thousand-member church. His name is Wilfredo de Jesus. He leads a Hispanic congregation, primarily, but has an English congregation there as well. He is growing with the many immigrants who are around, yet he is ministering to Hispanics as a whole.

I have a church under my supervision that was a Hispanic American church for a long time. Within the last ten to fifteen years it has begun to decrease in growth and is

¹⁹ Tom Clegg and Warren Bird, *Lost in America: How Your Church Can Impact the World Next Door* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001).

now at about twenty-five congregants on a good Sunday. There is no doubt that the demise of the American church affects not just Anglo-Saxon Americans but Hispanic Americans as well. The challenge that the American church is facing crosses nationalities. It seems that the problem is focused primarily on the church that is “American.”

African American Churches

Date:

1502-*African slaves first came to the Western Hemisphere when they were brought to Hispaniola.*

1535-*Cabeza de Vaca, A Spanish explorer in the New World, and three other men were the only survivors out of 300 men who had left Spain in 1527. He led them through part of the southeast of present day USA and into Mexico where they were rescued. One of the three other men was Benitez, a Black man. He is the first Black person known to have come to present day US. In an odd twist of fate, the Indians several times made Cabeza de Vaca a slave.*²⁰

Wed, 1758-11-01

**This dates Registry from 1758, briefly writes about the history of the Black Church in America. This institution which was the first source of land ownership for slaves in America (with the human character of black people) is viewed as the reason and savior of oppressed African people in the United States.*

During the decades of slavery in America, slave associations were a constant source of concern to slave owners. For many members of white society, Black religious meetings symbolized the ultimate threat to white existence. Nevertheless, African slaves established and relied heavily on their churches Religion offered a means of catharsis...Africans retained their faith in God and found refuge in their churches. However, white society was not always willing to accept the involvement of slaves in Christianity. As one slave recounted “the white folks would come in when the colored people would have prayer meeting, and whip every one of them.

²⁰Mark Nickens, 2008, accessed May 2014, <http://www.christiantimelines.com/timelines.html>.

*Most of them thought that when colored people were praying it was against them.*²¹

In the Church of God of Prophecy, the African American work is not as strong as it should be. In its early days, this denomination experienced the Jim Crow laws. When I have asked those who are of age to remember that, I am told, “We were obeying the laws of the land.”

I was privileged to spend two weeks in the home of a minister named Dorothy Deadrick and her husband, Deacon Lionel Deadrick, and she related the story of the African Americans struggle to have a voice and to be recognized in the Church of God of Prophecy. She was the first African American woman to preach at our annual General Assembly, and even though she was on the program, she was not allowed to step up into the podium, where the whites were. I asked her, “Why would you stay with a church like this, that would prejudice you in such a manner. To my amazement her response was “I love this church.”

In Texas, we had eight African American COGOPs, and one of those today has a Hispanic American pastor. In all the years I ministered in Texas, which was about thirty years, I saw very little growth in the African American churches within the Church of God of Prophecy. Not only did I not see any growth, but also I saw them decline to a point of needing to be disbanded or merged.

In the Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region of The Church of God of Prophecy, at present we have only one African American Church of God of Prophecy, which I had the blessing to be able to organize in 2012. In this short period of time, they have grown from

²¹ Marvin McMickle, *An Encyclopedia of African American Christian Heritage* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press), 2002.

a handful of people to about sixty congregants. Their projection in leadership development exceeds those of other churches within our regional structure, and their zeal is invigorating as they tread forward in an upward pattern to disciple and empower those who are within their ministry.

Not all African American churches are on a downward spiral, and those that are not have a great deal going on in their ministry. They are not only ministering to the soul, but also they have a great strategic holistic ministry of mind body and soul.

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that Christians are losing their share of the U.S. population dropping to 71 percent in 2014, down from 78 percent in 2007, with young people leading the exodus. But historically black denominations have bucked that trend, holding on to a steady percent of members during that same period.

A significant share of millennial-generation African-Americans who affiliate with historically black churches is similar to that of older churchgoers.

There are numerous reasons why some black churches retain their members, but most prominently, the church has played a historic role in black life that has fostered a continuing strong black Protestant identity. Members and visitors at Alfred Street say the church's holistic ministry—the preaching, the singing and the community outreach—are what draw them in and keep them there.²²

The African American church was rooted deep in the heart of its slave hood. When slaves would gather for prayer, the “white masters” would come in and whip them while they were deep in prayer, with the reason that they were afraid that their prayer was to overtake them. So the Blacks sung spiritual hymns during their workdays and prayed for deliverance at nightfall.

Of all the outstanding black American religious leaders in the twentieth century, one of the least recognized is William Joseph Seymour, the unsung pastor of the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, and a catalyst of the Worldwide Pentecostal movement. Only in the last few decades have scholars become aware of his importance, beginning perhaps with Yale University historian Sidney Ahlstrom, who said Seymour personified a black piety “which exerted its greatest direct influence on

²² Adelle M. Banks, “Why African American Mega Churches Are Still Going Strong,” *Charisma News*, 2015.

American religious history, placing Seymour's impact ahead of figures like W. E. B. Dubois and Martin Luther King, Jr.²³

In a study referenced in a class in Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the professor stated that "by the year 2000, we the spiritual heirs of Seymour, the Pentecostals and Charismatics, numbered over 500 million adherents, making it the second largest family of Christians in the world."²⁴

COGOP's Denominational Historical Facts in Regard to Church Growth

According to our own figures, COGOP's denominational growth in the United States has been struggling for quite some time. Since our inception as a church organization to the present we can see the facts:

"In January 27, 1906, names of 21 members were listed as those attending the first General Assembly."²⁵

"By 1910 they had grown to about 1005 members, with 27 churches, and by 1920 those figures mushroomed to 14,606 members in 389 congregations."²⁶

"In August of 2000, our membership in the United States, was at about 76,384 members in 1882 congregations."²⁷

"In 2006, it is registered that we had 84,761 members with 1871 churches in the

²³ Vinson Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001). 275.

²⁴ Stanley Burgess, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 446.

²⁵ Church of God of Prophecy, "General Assembly Minutes 1906–1914," *Photographic Reproductions of the First 10 General Assembly Minutes, 1992*: 337, 19.

²⁶ Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, 118.

²⁷ Church of God of Prophecy, *Assembly Minutes* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2000), 170.

United States, and Canada.”²⁸

“In 2010, records show that we had 92,510 members with 1845 churches.”²⁹

From these figures we can see that from the year 2000 to the year 2010, we had increased up to 16,159 members, but had decreased in congregations, to 63 less than in the year 2000.

This last number is down from 2006 by about 26 churches. That equates to about 1,937 members a year, bringing the gain to about 1 member per church. We can assume that not every COGOP congregation gained 1 member, as well as that not every COGOP congregation gained only 1 member. In the most recent report from the 99th International General Assembly held in Orlando, Florida, in July 2016, our count now is at 93,827 members, which includes Canada, in 1,779 churches. In these latest figures, we show an increase in membership of 1,317, with a decrease in the number of churches by 66.

In my historical studies of COGOP, it seems that in its humble beginnings this church gained new souls rather quickly, as the numbers show in reports. But as time passed, it becomes noticeable that the denomination in the United States began to see a continuing pattern of declining number of churches, possibly due to the merging of churches and the disbanding and transferring of members to nearby churches. As Hollis L. Green writes, “Christianity Has Lost Its Sunday Punch.”³⁰ It seems this is the problem that my area of ministry has been having.

²⁸ Church of God of Prophecy, *Church of God of Prophecy International General Assembly Minutes*, 261.

²⁹ The Church of God of Prophecy. *Church of God of Prophecy International General Assembly Minutes*, ed. Virginia E. Chatham (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2010), 152.

³⁰ Hollis, L. Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 15; this is the title of Green’s first chapter.

As was mentioned previously, some churches within my area of ministry have stayed stuck in a particular era of time, which diminishes their desire to share the gospel with others around them, and this will eventually affect them as well. This is crucial when it comes to church growth. This is one of the great challenges facing this area of ministry, in that people coming to church are not being taught discipleship: to go into the world to do the work Christ mandated (Matthew 28:18-20).

When a church ceases to share the gospel, it ceases to grow and becomes a ministry directed only at those in attendance. If the same people stay in the same place for years without outreach, numbers dwindle; churches decline and will eventually die out. As Green writes, “The preaching of the Gospel, the teaching of the Word, the singing of hymns, the praying and the Christian fellowship in the church should create a force to send the membership into the whitened fields of harvest.”³¹

³¹ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 45-46.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the early 1960s the church growth movement was started by Donald McGavran. Peter Wagner popularized the movement in the United States at Fuller Seminary in the 1970s, and in the 1980s it exploded in the evangelical scene.¹ The interest in literature on church growth in America is a subject which is researched and written about by many Christian authors. Various authors weigh in with research findings and offer conclusions on what is happening to the church in America. Some authors write about the slow death of the church in America, while others give it a positive review, saying that the church in America is not dying, that it is just being transformed. This research paper will review some of the causes of the demise of the English-language church in America, which includes the Anglo-Saxon church, the Hispanic American church and the African American church, as well as the pattern that seems to precede its end.

Particular to this study is the difference of the church growth patterns that have occurred and are currently happening among the English-language church in America, and the non-English, including Swahili-speaking and Spanish-language churches. The books that this writer will review are some which will help to provide a foundation for this project. The books which will be reviewed are David Barton's *The Founders' Bible*;²

¹ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006).

² David Barton, *The Founders' Bible: The Origin of the Dreams of Freedom*, ed. Brad Cummins and Lance Wobbles (Newbury Park, CA: Shiloh Road Publishers, 2012).

Realidades Hispanas by Daniel R Sanchez;³ *Why Churches Die* by Hollis L. Green;⁴ *Barna Trends 2017*;⁵ *Breaking the Missional Code* by Ed Stetzer and David Putman;⁶ and *African Pentecostalism* by Ogbu Kalu.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to ascertain the ingredients of what is causing church growth in the immigrant church in America, as well as what is causing the slow demise of the American church in the region I supervise, The Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region, which includes Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, and Minnesota. It is the hope of this writer to apply the knowledge gleaned from each of the study books in order to assist churches on both sides of this spectrum. Each and every one of these books cited here and those in my bibliography are extremely helpful in recognizing the points of view from each writer's perspective.

In this study, I am searching for answers so that I can prevent the American churches in my area of supervision, and abroad as well, from becoming a statistic among the churches that have died or have ceded property or resources to immigrant groups. I also want to assist the immigrant church from getting so assimilated to America that it in the future could get to where the American church is now, in a slow but eventual demise.

³ Daniel R. Sanchez, *Realidades Hispanas: Que Impactan A America, Implicaciones, para la Evangelizacion y Misiones* (Ft. Worth, TX: Cadena de Sembrar Iglesias, 2006).

⁴ Hollis L. Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972).

⁵ The Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017: What's New and What's Next at the intersection of Faith and Culture*, ed. Roxanne Stone (Grand Rapids, MI Baker Books, 2016).

⁶ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*.

⁷ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

The Dream of Freedom

David Barton, a historian, is setting the record straight on the history of America's founding, as he writes about our need to remember the true reason for the early English pilgrimage to this land. Throughout his book are historical facts from the archives of writers who penned the initial entries to the land known as America, and most of these follow a portion of Scripture which relates a story similar to the historical facts brought out. The reason for coming to this land was in search of true religious freedom and the promulgation of the Christian religion. The Jamestown Charter of 1606 stated the purpose of the early Christian crusade that was initiated by the English:

We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government; DO, by these our Letters, Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended Desires.⁸

The purpose for bringing this writ out is to set a foundation for the expansion of the gospel by the early forefathers of the thirteen colonies. The pastor of the first colonists, Robert Hunt, offered a prayer which is in the archives as well, and he mentioned that the endeavor was for the express purpose of "propagating the Christian Religion."⁹ The English-language church in America, which began in the early 1600s, started out well as their mission of taking the gospel as Jesus mandated in Matthew 28:18-20. A speech by President John F. Kennedy in February 1961 mentions that this country was founded by dedicated men and women with two propositions, "a strong religious

⁸ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 35.

⁹ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 35.

conviction, and secondly a recognition that this conviction could flourish only under a system of freedom.”¹⁰

It seems that the writings within this book of Barton coincide with the purpose of my paper. The church expanded and grew through the many difficulties it experienced in its humble beginnings, but what caused its slow decline is the question I am trying to ascertain an answer to in this research.

Barton brings out the many liberties that the early English men and women experienced in the newfound land called America. And it seems that these same ideals that opened up their freedom could have become the same ingredients that caused their slow demise. The details in this book on the early history of the church in America plots a map on the route the early Americans took to acquire freedom of religion, as well as it details the beginnings of what we now see turned quite the opposite of its initial start.

One of those things that the early Americans started was the first school of higher education. According to Barton, the first school of higher education was started in Henrico, Virginia, in 1620, but was wiped out by an Indian massacre in 1622. The second school and the first to survive was Harvard College, chartered in 1636. Its rules set forth what was expected of every student seeking a higher degree: “Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3), and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.”¹¹

It seems that the early schools of higher education were intended to teach young men (women were then not admitted to colleges) how to be educated in the Christian

¹⁰ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 645.

¹¹ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 1651.

walk and all of the Christian disciplines. What happened to all of the good that the schools started with was gotten rid of, such as throwing prayer out of schools in 1963.

In finalizing this entry on Barton's *Founders' Bible* and the dream of freedom, I end with a quote from historian and writer Will Durant (1885–1981), who asks: “Have we too much Freedom? . . . We forgot to make ourselves intelligent when we made ourselves free.”¹²

Continuing the Dream

Daniel R. Sanchez, in his Spanish-language book, *Realidades Hispanas Que Impactan América: Implicaciones para Evangelización y Misiones* (*Hispanic Realities Impacting America: Implications for Evangelism and Missions*), details Hispanic immigration and how the church has been affected by it in the United States. The details in this writing are eye-opening and helpful in directing our mission focus toward this growing minority.

Sanchez details the many facets of growth of the Hispanic populace which can assist the churches in America to make an all-out effort to “evangelize” this people group. In this book are great insights into the Hispanic culture, its diversity, and the variety of nations which this people group represents. He writes:

A fin de entender a los hispanos es esencial familiarizarse con su historia. Saber cómo los grupos hispanos vinieron a ser parte de la escena americana es indispensable para tener un entendimiento de su peregrinaje y para desarrollo de estrategias contextualizadas para convencerlos a una fe personal en Cristo que resulte en el establecimiento de iglesias culturalmente relevantes entre ellos.

In order to understand the Hispanics, it is essential to become familiar with their history. To learn how the Hispanic groups came to be a part the American scene is indispensable to better understand their pilgrimage and to develop contextualized

¹² Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 2031.

strategies to convince them to a personal faith in Christ which results in the establishment of churches culturally relevant among them.¹³

The history of how the Hispanic populace arrived is important to this research paper as well. The Hispanics have been in the Southwest part of what is now the United States since the sixteenth century. Catholic priests were sent with the explorers to establish the Catholic Church in whatever new land they were to come across. The Catholic Church established its first and oldest church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the first Spanish colony was established. Sanchez tells of the three colonies that were established as missions, the first being in New Mexico, the second in Texas, and the third in Tucson, Arizona.

This is key in recognizing that this people group were like the European English immigrants who came to America in the 1600s, as they also came for a religious purpose, to promulgate the gospel of Jesus Christ. The writing details the strength of the early church in the Southwest and how it grew as many Catholic missions were established. Juan Gonzalez writes, “Spanish Monks played a crucial role in colonizing major parts of the United States. Most important were the Franciscans, who founded nearly forty thriving missions in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama during the 1600s and numerous others in the Southwest. Spanish Monks today are recognized as the founders of San Antonio, El Paso, Santa Fe, Tucson, San Diego, Los Angeles, Monterey and San Francisco.”¹⁴

¹³ Sanchez, *Realidades Hispanas*, 65. The English translations are those of the author of this thesis-project.

¹⁴ Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), 15-16.

According to Gonzalez's book, the European settlers justified the conquest and genocide of native people as God's will. The Spanish and the English differed substantially in their methods of subjugation, and this eventually led to radically different colonial societies. English kings, for instance, ordered their agents to "conquer, occupy and possess" the lands of the "heathens and infidels" but said nothing of the people inhabiting them, while Spain, following the dictates of Pope Alexander VI, sought not only to grasp the land but also to make any pagans found on it "embrace the Catholic faith and be trained in good morals."¹⁵

Sanchez's research on the Hispanic populace is detailed and states, "Between 1975 and 2005, the Hispanic population grew from 9.6 million to 42.7 million, which is an increase of 33.1 million."¹⁶ The Hispanic population increase is a great cause for the immigrant church to grow exponentially. From the beginning of the Spanish entry in the United States in the 1500s, we can see the continuation of this great influx of Spanish-language people from different parts of the Spanish-speaking world. This contributes to growth and causes its presence to surpass the number of other people groups within the Christian structure in the United States. Sanchez writes, "Today the Hispanic Evangelicals make up 23 percent of the Hispanic Population, the greatest growth which has taken place in the last two decades."¹⁷

The diaspora of the Hispanic population is being felt by various markets in the United States. Supermarkets (*supermercados*) cater to the diverse food desires of the Hispanic population. Banks offering their services and their loan documents in the Spanish language tend to show that businessmen know how to tap into that language

¹⁵ Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*, 13.

¹⁶ Sanchez, *Hispanic Realities Impacting America*, 3.

¹⁷ Sanchez, *Hispanic Realities Impacting America*, 145.

market. The Hispanic peoples are here for a purpose, which Sanchez believes is a “God called reason, that the Hispanics come here. Also, that the Hispanic growth in the church is a spiritual outpouring from the Latin-American Evangelical church.”¹⁸

In my area of ministry, we have several nationalities from the various parts of the Spanish-speaking: Panama, Honduras, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru, Columbia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, Ecuador, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. People from these countries who come to the United States come for various reasons. The majority come for financial advancement, some fleeing persecution, many fleeing governmental civil wars, and many more fleeing for safety from the drug lords who take their young people and corrupt them into being mules for the trade. One of the many traits that these people bring is one of family values, religious beliefs, and dedication to that belief. In their entry to the United States, assimilation is key to existence. The young people, as they enter the educational system, are now required to live and function in a two-culture environment. English language is a must for those who attend school; that creates a problem for some and for others is just another hurdle to jump. Some parents are frustrated as they see their children learn English faster than they do, and when it comes to help in their school work and other areas in which they participate, the parents realize that they can be of little help if any.

Biculturalism is the capability to have two worlds in one's head and live in both of these worlds with some degree of proficiency. A bicultural person can value both worlds yet see the negatives and the positives of both simultaneously. Biculturalism is also the ability to interpret these different worlds or cultures to those who cannot fully understand or appreciate them.¹⁹

¹⁸ Sanchez, *Hispanic Realities Impacting America*, 146.

¹⁹ Orlando Crespo, *Being Latino in Christ: Finding Wholeness in Your Ethnic Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 116.

Global migration is happening at an astounding rate. Wan and Casey note that “in 2013, of the just over 7 billion people in the world, 232 million were living in a country they were not born in. Put together in one place, migrants would compose the fourth largest country of the world and they are becoming a force in global trends from economics to education.”²⁰ Immigration is a wave which is not likely to stop. Wan and Casey’s book is an outstanding resource in the study of Hispanic immigration and the process of assimilation.

According to the Pew Research Center, “The Latino population in the United States has reached nearly 58 million in 2016 and has been the principal driver of U.S. demographic growth, accounting for half of national population growth since 2000. The Latino population itself has evolved during this time, with changes in immigration, education and other characteristics. This summary draws on a statistical portrait of the nation’s Hispanic population, which includes trends going back to 1980.”²¹

Here are some key facts about the nation’s Latino population: “The Hispanic population has reached a new high, but growth has slowed. In 2016, Hispanics accounted for 18% of the nation’s population and were the second-largest racial or ethnic group behind whites. All racial groups are single race non-Hispanic.”²² The influx of so many people groups into the United States should not cause alarm. Instead, they should be received with open arms, as they are here to assist us with the task of promulgating the gospel of Jesus Christ.

²⁰ Enoch Wan and Anthony Casey, *Church Planting among Immigrants in US Urban Centers: The “Where,” “Why,” and “How” of Diaspora Missiology in Action*, vol. 6, (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies-USA, 2014), 16.

²¹ Antonio Flores, “How the Hispanic Population Is Changing,” Pew Research Center, September 18, 2017, accessed October 9, 2017, <http://pewrsr.ch/2wBy0qS>.

²² Flores, “How the Hispanic Population Is Changing.”

The State of the Church

In the chapter titled “Racial Differences Concerning Discipleship,” Barna associate writer Joyce Chiu writes about the different approaches whites and blacks have in regard to discipleship. In my research, I want to find out why certain cultures or races have more success in promulgating the gospel and creating church growth. Chiu writes, “Black Christians are more likely to describe the process of spiritual progress as ‘Spiritual Maturation’ (31%). White Christians prefer the phrase ‘Spiritual Growth’ (21%). Barna found that this slight difference in word choice—maturation verses growth—encapsulates key differences between black and white Christians.”²³

Barna Trends references both people groups and has surveyed them in topics such as impact of faith and spiritual practices. Detailed questions were asked which pertain to the individual group’s mindset and practices in regard to spiritual ideals. Chiu’s chapter gives some insight on the traits that each people group displays in regard to family contribution to Christian fellowship. According to this writer, blacks are more likely than whites to have a relationship with mentors, family members, and other Christians and call it “valuable.”

Barna Trends is significant to my subject, as it dives deep into American’s depth of church involvement, as well as individuals’ degree of faith. According to this research, the unchurched cities in America are listed, and what is somewhat revelatory is that two of these cities, Boston, Massachusetts, and Manchester, Massachusetts, were some of the first places to be inhabited by Christians who came to America in the 1600s. Now these cities have become figures in the top ten of unchurched cities.

²³ Barna Group, *Barna Trends*, 164.

This is the exact situation that this study is trying to come up with an answer as to why. Barna's chapter "Post-Christian Metric" tells us about the Americans belief system:

More than Four in Ten Americans Now Post-Christian. Post-Christian meaning individuals who meet 60 percent more of the following factors (nine or more). Highly post-Christian individuals meet 80 percent or more of the factors (12 or more of these 15 criteria).

- Do not believe in God
- Identify as atheist or agnostic
- Disagree that faith is important in their lives
- Have not prayed to God in the last year
- Have never made a commitment to Jesus
- Disagree the Bible is accurate
- Have not donated money to a church in the last year
- Have not attended a Christian church in the last year
- Agree that Jesus committed sins
- Do not feel a responsibility to "share their faith"
- Have not read the Bible in the last week
- Have not volunteered in church in the last week
- Have not attended Sunday school in the last week
- Have not attended religious small group in the last week
- Do not participate in a house church in the last year²⁴

Why Churches Die

Hollis L. Green in *Why Churches Die* gives an insightful view of the lack of growth in denominations in America. He writes that he recognizes the growth crisis, and this book addresses that point. In his book, he details how the American church has lost its Sunday punch, as he puts it. "A failure to adequately use the renewal aspects of the first day of the week brings about serious consequences for the church today. Among those difficulties is the development of a theology of coercion based on a misunderstanding of the Great Commission."²⁵

²⁴ Barna Group, *Barna Trends*, 184.

²⁵ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 19.

Green brings out some good foundational points about why he thinks the church in America is on a slow decline. One of his reasons is that Americans have filled their first day of the week with things other than church attendance. This leads to Americans of all colors slowly drifting away from church attendance, and the numbers do add up rather quickly. Green's book tells of the lost cause of Christianity in American churches, and that is to disciple converts to be witnesses of that which they have received. Green reminds us that the purpose of the church is "somewhat thwarted as it was established to reach out to the needs of mankind."²⁶

Several chapters in Green's book are dedicated to the reasons the church in America is dying. The desire Americans have for church has been overcome by materialism, sports, me-ism, and the "American dream." People, according to Green, have lost their spiritual fervor for the call of God in their lives. And this causes church attendance to be minimal and creates no guilt in individuals, as they feel good about what they are doing.

Green offers several thoughts on why the church in America is dying away. One of these is the familiarity of the congregation's routine of church attendance. Green writes, "As the religious life of such a church becomes organized, pastoral care becomes a regular part of the church ministry and the congregation becomes passive about growth and progress. Regular services are scheduled and the pastor is very active in programming for his constituency. Members develop a philosophy of come to see us if you can, but if you don't come, we'll manage without you."²⁷

²⁶ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 60.

²⁷ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 137.

Green details how members drift into a mode in which church becomes just another place to go when the time comes, and a member “slips into nominality.” He writes about the demographic changes within a church’s community and how, when blacks or Hispanics start to move in, whites begin to move out. This is another reason for the church’s demise, as the congregation decides not to minister to those in their community due to racial differences. He also writes, “When the church walls itself in and ministers only to those who attend, the base becomes the field of operation. This drastically, if not entirely, limits the outreach of the church.”²⁸

The state of conformity is one of the most difficulty and damaging mindsets that a church and its leaders can fall into. The exact point Green made in the previous quote is probably one of the biggest contributors to churches slowly dying away. The maintenance mode kicks in when a pastor or minister becomes satisfied with the status quo; then a sure death countdown can begin. In many instances, the root cause of the church’s declining attendance is the lackadaisical approach the pastor and leaders have taken in guiding and leading the local congregation. “Church leaders are to ask the congregation to follow them as they follow the Lord, but so often the leadership follows the people rather than setting the pace and pattern for the congregation. Many churchman today are similar to a personality in history who said, ‘There go the people. I am their leader. I must follow them.’”²⁹

²⁸ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 44.

²⁹ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 113.

Church as a Missionary in the Community

Ed Stetzer and David Putman write a compelling book, as they agree that the reason behind the church's lack of growth is the lack of churches becoming missional. They write, "Our growing cultural diversity requires a church within the reach of every people group, population segment, and cultural environment if we are to be faithful to the Great Commission."³⁰

In their research Stetzer and Putnam conclude that the need for American churches is to identify the demographics in the areas the churches need to affect. Immigration has played a big part in demographic changes, and that in itself demands a change or a different method of reaching those within the community. They correctly assert that this will be the "Ethnic Millennium." For example:

- In the 90s, while the general U.S. population grew by 6 percent, Asians grew by 107 percent, Hispanics grew by 53 percent, Native Americans grew by 38 percent.
- Twenty-five of the largest U.S. cities are now majority ethnic. Ethnicity makes up 61 percent of Chicago, 73 percent of New York, and 78 percent of Los Angeles.
- There are more Filipinos and Armenians in Los Angeles than in any city in the world. There are more Cubans in Miami than in Havana.³¹

This book also includes new types of research and surveys, such as "psychographics," being conducted by missiologists and researchers in an attempt to help them understand how people relate and what binds them together. "Psychographics is a system for measuring consumers' beliefs, opinions and interests. It's like demographics but instead of counting age, gender, race, etc., it counts psychological information (opinions on abortion, religious beliefs, music tastes, personality traits, etc.). Marketing

³⁰ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 10.

³¹ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 11-12.

research usually combines demographic and psychographic information.”³² America’s values on things that the psychographics researchers find are a sad indicator of where the moral compass is directed.

Another reason there is such a decline in the American church is due to the lack of better moral judgement among people. This book also brings out the various methods that several churches they surveyed are using to influence their congregants to stay interested in attending the church services that the ministry provides.

This book has a lot of information that will be useful for those who read it with a purposeful mind to grasp what these writers have researched and journaled. They have a different view of the church in America. While others say the church is dying, they feel that the church is in a transformational age.

From Africa to the Americas

African Pentecostalism by Ogbu Kalu is enlightening, as it details the work of the Pentecostal church in various parts of Africa. (This book is in my bibliography because I will reference African American churches, as well as African immigrant churches in America.) In this book, Kalu references a March 26, 2006, *Seattle Times* article that declared the upsurge of “Christianity’s Second Wave”:

Based on the data from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, the newspaper pointed fingers toward charismatic and Pentecostal movements as the agents of the second wave.

The newspaper echoed the first page of *The New York Times* of April 18, 2004, that blazoned its own caption as a statement. “In New York, Gospel Resounds in African Tongues and Pulses to the Beat of Congas.” The author, Daniel J. Watkins, posed the problem in a broader perspective:

³² Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 12.

Every Sunday, in more than 100 churches across New York, pastors preach the Gospel in languages like Ibo, Twi, and Ga. Conga drums drive the songs of praise. Swaths of kente cloth cover bodies swaying in the pews. An explosion of African immigrant churches in the past year has helped reshape religious worship in the city. The surge is creating oases of Christian faith for newcomers from Nigeria, Ghana, Congo, Ethiopia and other countries and fueling an evangelical movement long the province of Latinos and African Americans.³³

In a class on African Pentecostalism at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I was introduced to an African pastor from Kenya who lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Iowa is one of the states which I preside over, and the class was an eye-opening one into the African style of worship, among other things. I realized that if I had not taken the class, I would not have been ready to experience what I did as I began to attend their services as well as minister to them. The African styles of worship, singing, praying, and dancing are like none that I have experienced. These Africans have come from several parts of Africa as refugees, granted asylum by the United States government. They started with about fifty-five attendees and now they are at about two hundred attendees every Sunday afternoon. I have been in contact with many Africans ministers who now reside in Nashville, Tennessee; Fargo, North Dakota; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Des Moines, Iowa.

Colin Palmer gives a broader historical perspective:

In the 360 years between 1500 and the end of the slave trade in the 1860s, at least 12 million Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas—then known as the “New World” to European settlers. This largest forced migration in human history relocated some 50 ethnic and linguistic groups. Only a small portion of the enslaved—less than half a million—were sent to North America. The majority went to South America and the Caribbean. In the mid-1600s, Africans outnumbered Europeans in nascent cities such as Mexico City, Havana and Lima.

Nearly a quarter of the Africans brought to North America came from Angola, while an equal percentage, arriving later, originated in Senegambia. Over

³³ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 271-72.

40 percent of Africans entered the U.S. through the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, the center of the U.S. slave trade.³⁴

According to a Pew Foundation study,

African immigrants make up a small share of the nation's immigrant population, but their overall numbers are growing—roughly doubling every decade since 1970, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. There were 2.1 million African immigrants living in the United States in 2015, up from 881,000 in 2000 and a substantial increase from 1970 when the U.S. was home to only 80,000 foreign-born Africans. They accounted for 4.8% of the U.S. immigrant population in 2015, up from 0.8% in 1970. The growth is evident among recently arrived immigrants. When compared with other major groups who arrived in the U.S. in the past five years, Africans had the fastest growth rate from 2000 to 2013, increasing by 41% during that period. (Africans are also a fast-growing segment of the black immigrant population in the U.S., increasing by 137% from 2000 to 2013.)

African immigrants to the U.S. are more likely to settle in the South (39%) or the Northeast (25%), than in the Midwest (18%) or West (17%), while the largest numbers of African immigrants are found in Texas, New York, California, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Virginia. Each of these states is home to at least 100,000 foreign-born Africans.³⁵

As these statistics show, 18% of African immigrants have settled in the area I supervise.

Kalu states that while Pentecostalism is thought to be what happened in Africa due to the Azusa Street Revival with William Seymour, he attests that Pentecostalism had already been happening in Africa. He writes,

Undoubtedly, the Azusa street revival is very important, but it is a North American event, and a certain movement that first called itself Pentecostal, and whose genealogy may be traced to a host of religious antecedents such as holiness movements. But other regions experienced the move of the Spirit independently; therefore, there is a need to reconstruct the historiography of the movement worldwide, and to interrogate the extant literature. For instance, Dale Irvin admits that Azusa Street was a “local history with a global design” because missionaries were sent from Azusa Street. But he used this concept of “the logic of Pentecostal

³⁴ Colin A. Palmer, “From Africa to the Americas: Ethnicity in the Early Black Communities of the Americas,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 231.

³⁵ Monica Anderson, “African Immigrant Population in U.S. Steadily Climbs,” Pew Foundation Research, February 14, 2017, accessed September 19, 2017, <http://pewrsr.ch/2l55fhT>.

Spirituality” to explain the global dimension.³⁶

Conclusion

As was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, various authors took on the challenge of writing about why they thought that the church in America is declining, or as some have stated, “transforming.”

Barton’s book sets the stage for readers to be able to recognize that the early Christians who came to America had a great desire to promote Christianity and to live in a country that allowed freedom of religion, and so America was founded on those principles. The numerous entries in Barton’s *Founders’ Bible* brought out key themes of historical accounts as to the importance of spreading the Christian gospel.

From presidents to ministers, a well-grounded and foundational base was established to show the United States was founded on Christian principles. Whether they were the greatest and most faithful of the flock is not for me or anyone to judge, but their words seemed to be quite impactful as to describing their belief and intent on following the path which Christianity has outlined.

Sanchez’s writing on Hispanic realities described the faith of many others who immigrated here from other countries. They also held a depth of faith so as to come to this continent to set up missions and to promote the Catholic Church. He writes about the numbers of people from other Hispanic countries who have come here to live a good life and to give to their children what they did not have when they were growing up.

Green, writing about why churches die, brings out some key thoughts that cause one to think about the many reasons the church in America is dying. He teaches in his

³⁶ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 13.

book that the church is dying is because it is failing to follow the blueprint that Jesus had left for his disciples to follow. He writes some cold and hard truths that have been gleaned from other sources and from churches themselves. He seems to put the blame on the lack of growth in some churches and the slow death of others on congregations not committed to church attendance, led by pastors with the same attitude.

The statistical work done by the Barna Group has supplied some good numbers reviewing the cause and effect of what is happening with the population and in churches. Barna associates write about the various people groups and their view of the faith they have and what they are doing about the expansion of this faith.

Stetzer and Putman tell of how churches grow, and that is by being personable and loving to each and every person one meets. They write about how a local church can come back to life by becoming missionary minded, and that does not mean sending finances to Africa, South America, or Central America, but for each person in the church to become a missionary around one's neighborhood and community, as well as the area where the local church is located.

Kalu brings a point of view about the African Pentecostal movement than was originally believed. Not all stories come from North America, he writes. Africa has its story as well, before the North American story of how the Holy Spirit descended in Azusa. Africa was already endued by God's Spirit, and Africans were already functioning in the Spirit, as missionaries were to find out when they arrived in Africa. Each and every one has a story, and each makes a lot of sense in its own right.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (Matthew 16:13-20)¹

In this chapter I will consider various Scriptures in regard to the purpose of the church and what it is supposed to be. Also included will be a definition of the word *church* in its original Greek terminology, as well as in the Hebrew language, and what it has now come to be known as. In this chapter, I will also attempt to present a biblical framework for the progress of the church from its birth to the present. Many of the Scriptures used will define the church and its purpose, as well as give an insight as to what the church was doing, what the church is doing, and what the church should be doing. Each of these aforementioned directives will be biblically based and Scriptures to support each of these presented.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are from the New International Version (2011).

The reason for bringing out these directives is to show that the American church, as well as the immigrant church, has the same mandates from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Each of the points brought out in this research is important to mention, as the subject has to do with what is happening to the churches in America. As well as having the same mandates, the American church and the immigrant church have some similar challenges.

At its beginning, the church in America quickly became the American church. The first immigrants coming to this land from European countries began mobilizing their missionaries to “propagate the Christian Religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.”² It was not long before they became complacent and overconfident of their ideals; they began to slowly lose their saltiness, as the Scripture says, and began to place their light “under a bushel.”

The new American church found itself in dire need of remembering its initial purpose for fleeing England and coming to this country.

With the passage of time in the early colonies, the aspirations of the Puritan forefathers for a Christian utopia in the New World declined as did morality. In 1688 William Stoughton, a colonial magistrate and administrator in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, stood before the Massachusetts legislature and said, “O what sad metamorphosis hath of later years passed upon us in these churches and plantations! Alas! How is New England in danger to be buried in its own ruins.”³

² David Barton, *The Founders' Bible: The Origin of the Dream of Freedom* (Newbury Park, CA: Shiloh Road Publishers, 2012), 35.

³ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 551.

Similarly, “Pennsylvania Presbyterian minister and eventual chaplain in Congress, Rev. Samuel Blair, Stated, ‘*Religion lay as it were dying, and ready to expire its last breath of life in this part of the visible church.*’ The same conditions were prevalent throughout all the colonies, from New England to the far South.”⁴ What caused the early churches’ slow drop in its first, heartfelt desire, to worship and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, is possibly a characteristic of what is causing the church in America “to lose its Sunday punch,” as Hollis Green puts it.⁵

While we know that “with the passage of time . . . utopia in the New World declined as well as morality” (Barton, quoting Stoughton), it not only happened then, but continues to happen now in the life of most immigrants coming to the United States. As soon as things which I connect to the “American dream” happen, it seems that inevitably it brings a halt to the heart’s desire to evangelize the world with the gospel.

The “American dream,” as I often say, becomes the “devil’s scheme.” Materialism becomes the main thrust of life as financial gain begins to happen. Those who are easily swayed fall into the snare and are slowly taken over in their jobs and then in their rest and recreation, which would happen on Sunday. The “loss of . . . Sunday punch” is affected by the self-gratification that Americans feel is necessary for their five-to-ten-hours-a-day employment. Within the first hundred years of Christians coming to America for religious freedom, they went from seeking to praise to seeking to prosper.

The dynamic preaching of Theodore Frelinghuysen, who came to America in 1720 to pastor Dutch churches and found the members spiritually cold and unemotional with little desire beyond outward formalism, was aimed at “awakening” the Dutch Reformed congregations in New Jersey and

⁴ Barton, *Founders’ Bible*, 552.

⁵ Hollis L. Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1972), 15.

spread to touch New England Congregational churches as well as Presbyterians scattered throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey.⁶

Historical Insights on the Word *Church*

The English word church is related to the Scottish word *kirk* and the German designation *kirche*, and all of these terms are derived from the Greek word *kuriakon*, the neuter adjective of *kurios* (“Lord”), meaning “belonging to the Lord.” The English word church also translates the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is derived from *ek*, meaning “out of,” and *kaleo*, which means “to call,” hence, the church is “a called-out group.”⁷

The word *ekklesia* (church), according to Adrian Varlack,⁸ “originally and properly belongs in the context of democracy—that democracy which recorded history tells us began in Athens, Greece about the 5th Century BC.”⁹ Pericles of Athens described how the *ecclesia* (Latin) functioned:

the rule was not in the hands of a few but under the control of the majority . . . we have an equal concern for home and for our polis . . . We are the judges of our own actions and give careful thought to our affairs. For us discussion is no bar to action; what is harmful is to act before submitting a policy to discussion. We are unusual in that we are capable of taking risks even after we have weighed their consequences, while other men are brave as long as they are ignorant but draw back upon reflection.¹⁰

Varlack continues to expound on the term *ecclesia* and mentions that the governing body of Athens was a gathering of male citizens for the purpose of public debate and vote. An *ecclesia* was made up of men only, and according to some early writers they directed foreign policy, revised the laws, and approved or condemned the conduct of public officials through a process called ostracism.

⁶ Barton, *Founders' Bible*, 552.

⁷ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 359.

⁸ Adrian Varlack Sr., “The Ekklesia—What the Church Was and Should Be,” in *Ecclesial Identity* (Cleveland, Tn: Center for Biblical Leadership, 2011), 10.

⁹ Patrick Watson and Benjamin Barber, *The Struggle for Democracy* (London: Little Brown, 1990), 5.

¹⁰ F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), 18, quoted in Doyle G. Whitaker, *What the Church Ought to Be* (Winnipeg, AB: Ekklesia Publishing, 2005), 34.

“Another source on how the word ‘*Ekklesia*’ was used and how its use became associated with the history of the Jewish people, is the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Old Testament purportedly by seventy Jewish scholars (hence its name) in Alexandria, Egypt, between 250 and 150 BC. The translators of the LXX consistently used the word ‘*Ekklesia*’ to render the Hebrew word ‘*qahal*’ which means ‘*community meeting*’ or ‘*public gathering*.’”¹¹ Both Jews and Greeks were to gather to hear God’s word, to praise and worship him in these public gatherings. As we can see from the definitions given, we can assume that the *ekklesia* or *qahal* or synagogue was the gathering place for them to join together as one body of believers.

The true purpose of the church was to follow the plan the founder himself, Jesus, had set up. He said to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:9-10). Again, Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). In these verses, we can see the reason Jesus said he came, and that was to find the lost; in the next verse he gives directions to those who follow him to do as he did. The early church did exactly as Jesus mandated (Matthew 28): “Go ye” is the English translation. God is sending us as his missionaries. “Just as God is a missionary God, so the church is to be a missionary church.”¹² “The Bible says the Church is nothing less than the Body of Christ. It is the Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9), the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2), the living temple of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).”¹³

¹¹ Peter J. Tomson, *If This Be from Heaven: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in Their Relationship to Judaism*, Biblical Seminar (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 24.

¹² Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 9.

¹³ Howard A. Snyder, “The Church in God’s Plan,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Hawthorne and Steven C. Winter (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977), 156.

In conclusion to this section, the purpose of the writer is to bring out the history of the word *church* and to establish that church was a gathering place for Christian believers. The importance of the gathering is outlined by defining terminology in the Greek as well as in the Hebrew.

What the Church Was Doing

In the book of Acts, at the day of Pentecost, Peter preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2:41). Acts 2:42-47 is key to recognizing what produces church growth:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

In this portion of Scripture, we see a true body of believers helping each other with their burdens and intentionally showing the love and compassion of God. For Christians to display this kind of love is what Christians call *Koinonia*, a term I first heard Dr. Eldin Villafañe use in a class titled "Joy of the Ministry."

Tim Koster and John Wagenveld, in *Take Your Church's Pulse*, say the following:

The early church understood strength lies in unity. But more than that, people were obeying the prayer of Jesus in which he asked the Father repeatedly to grant unity to the disciples so that the world would believe. The unity of the church is based on the connection between Jesus and the Father. The testimony of unity would constitute the missionary force that moved the church of the first century.

That same testimony continues to be the missionary force that pushes today's church.¹⁴

In Ed Stetzer's understanding of the term *go*, he seems to think that it could be one of the most misunderstood words to many people. He writes, "The word *go* in the text is the aorist particle *pareuo* in the Greek and carries with it the idea of 'while you go,' 'in your going,' and/or 'as you go.' The early church recognized that its primary mission was to 'go and make disciples' of all nations."¹⁵ The church that was commissioned by Jesus was doing as he had sent them to do. Even after all the persecution they were going through, it seemingly fanned the flame of zeal for the promulgation of the gospel even more. Tertullian, one of the second-century church fathers, is often quoted as saying, "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church"; the martyrs' willing sacrifice of their lives led to the conversion of others. The early church did move forward throughout its known world preaching the gospel.

There was an excitement in the early church once they realized, on that resurrection day, who had been their teacher, rabbi, friend, Savior, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ the Messiah. They were empowered and became bold when they knew Jesus' words of eternal life were true. They immediately went about the Father's business of letting the world know about his Son Jesus Christ. At that point, nothing would keep them locked up in a room as when he appeared to them: "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he

¹⁴ Tim Koster and John Wagenveld, *Take Your Church's Pulse* (Sauk Village, IL: Multiplication Network Ministries, 2014), 149.

¹⁵ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 120.

said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20).

Later, Peter continued the process on the day of Pentecost when 120 gathered in an upper room, praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised (Luke 24:45-49).

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

After that day, Peter preached and about three thousand people were added to their number (Acts 2:41).

They kept going as Jesus had commanded them. Acts 4:4 tells us, “But many who heard the message believed; so, the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.” Acts 5:14 tells us, “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” In Acts 6:1a we read, “In those days . . . the number of disciples was increasing.” “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). “Then, the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers” (Acts 9:31). As we view these various Scriptures, it seems that the growth of the church in depth and numbers is the work of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Scriptures we see the church going forward with the message of the good news, the gospel.

What the Church Is Doing

Bishop John V. Taylor is quoted by Samuel Escobar:

The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of things that he is doing in the world. In a special way, it consists of the light that he is focusing upon Jesus Christ. This fact, so patent to Christians in the first century, is largely forgotten in our own. So, we have lost our nerve and our sense of direction and have turned the divine initiative into a human enterprise. "It all depends on me" is an attitude that is bedeviling both the practice and the theology of our mission in these days.¹⁶

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it." Many books and articles by experts in church statistics give several views of the condition of the American church. Green mentions the death of the church, while Stetzer calls this a time of transition. In this portion of Scripture, Jesus said hell would not prevail against the church. While some would take this text literally, I can see that it might be out of context if it were to be used as a blanket statement. Statistics tell how many churches are closing each year, as well as how many churches are opening. It seems that in my area of supervision, there is a trend of churches merging instead of closing, which seems to be a better idea.

R. J. Krejcir of the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership

Development gives the following statistics:

- Every year more than 4,000 churches close their doors versus 1,000 new church starts.
- There were about 4,500 new churches started between 1990 and 2000, with a twenty-year average of nearly 1,000 a year.

¹⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 113, quoting John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 3.

- Every year, 2.7 million church members fall into inactivity and leave the church.
- At the turn of the century (1900), there was a ratio of 27 churches per 1,000 people, as compared with the close of this century (2000), where we have 11 churches per 10,000 people in America.
- The US now ranks third following China and India in the number of people who are not professing Christians; in other words, the US is becoming an ever increasing “un-reached people group.”
- Half of all churches in the US did not add any members to their ranks in the last two years.¹⁷

These statistics alone give a good indication that the American church is in a decline.

Barna’s “Church Attendance: A 30-Year Review” tells us:

- In 1986, 48% of Americans reported attending church in the past week
- In 1996, 37% of Americans reported attending church in the past week
- In 2006, 47% of Americans reported attending church in the past week
- In 2016, 35% of Americans reported attending church in the past week
- Chattanooga, Tennessee, ranks first for active church attendance by 63%
- San Francisco, California, ranks last for church attendance by 61%¹⁸

The ones leading the church are responsible for the forward movement of that particular group. “Church leaders are to ask the congregation to follow them as they follow the Lord, but too often the leadership follows the people rather than setting the

¹⁷ R. J. Krejcir, Francis A. *Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline* (Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, Pasadena, California) (research from 1998 to 2006), 2007.

¹⁸ The Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017: What’s New at the Intersection of Faith and Culture*, ed. Roxanne Stone (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 149.

pace and pattern for the congregation. Many churchmen today are similar to a personality in history who said ‘There go the people, I am their leader. I must follow them.’”¹⁹

While many fail to accept and recognize this, I think it is mostly because of the lackadaisical mentality that has captured many church leaders who want to be a “social pulpit guru” for reading Scripture and offering their own interpretation on Sunday morning. This attitude then trickles down to the congregation, which is already surrounded with so many other distractions that deter it from doing what the early church was doing, and that summarizes the reason for the slow decline of the church.

Within our region, several churches within the last twenty years have closed their doors. That does not mean that Jesus’ words that “the gates of hell would not prevail against it” were not true to those local churches that did close. Jesus’ words were not specifically local but were global in the correct contextual understanding.

The heartbeat of the local church is going to beat in the rhythm of music played at that church. If it is an upbeat ambiance, then the feeling will be upbeat and joyful; if it is a gloomy, hellfire-and-brimstone atmosphere, then it will follow that tone. If the pastor is a happy, outgoing individual, the congregation seems to mirror that characteristic. If he or she has an attitude that church is for Sunday only, the congregants follow. If the pastor is missional minded in that he spends his time visiting and touching base with unchurched people, the local congregants will get hooked on the characteristic as well. A pastor must by his title alone promote the gospel and create an environment similar the one in the book of Acts.

Bill Hybels said,

¹⁹ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 113.

If you went to the airport, and there were no airplanes landing, and there are no airplanes taking off, you'd say, "There's a problem!" If you went to the train station, and there were no trains coming and no trains leaving, you'd say, "There's a problem!" So why is it that we can be a part of churches that go on year after year with almost no truly unchurched people coming to faith in Christ, and with very few people really becoming more Christ-like, and yet think there's no problem. Friends, if that describes your church, "There's a problem!"²⁰

The American church has presently a varied opinion about church and its purpose. For example, "the Millennials, mostly twentysomethings, . . . are famously saying they no longer need church. 55% who grew up in the church have dropped out, 52 percent have not been to church in the last 6 months, and 1/3 don't see the church as important."²¹

The Missional Church

Jesus' words in John 20:21 was a missional command. The disciples were instructed to do as Jesus had taught them for the three and a half years he was with them. It is key to church growth in America to capture the essence of the words Jesus gave in that verse. He distinctly gave us authority to do as he had done while he walked the earth. What people are looking for in any church is that those who are there believe what they are teaching, preaching, and talking about. Today's church has a responsibility to be "salt and light," as Jesus said in Matthew 5:13-16:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

²⁰ Mark Mittelberg and Bill Hybels, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We Do Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 24.

²¹ Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2017*, 224.

As Jesus walked the streets of cities, he actively dealt with the people and their various needs. Through his preaching, teaching, and healing the sick, it is evident that his mission was holistic, with special attention to the mind, body, and the most important and eternal, the soul.

Jesus (Matthew 26:42; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4) announced that he had come to do the will of the Father who had sent him, and not his own will.

Christians are Kingdom people and Christ Himself is the eternal King over His kingdom. He has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father (Revelation 1:6). You are called into a partnership with Christ the King. In this partnership you will become involved in His mission to reconcile the lost world to God. To be related to God is to be on mission with Him. You cannot be in a relationship with Jesus and not be on mission. Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).²²

Stetzer writes. “Just as the church growth movement was man focused, the Church Health Movement was church/body focused. This movement centered on how the church body was related to Christ, and what was the best form of church (ecclesiology) in order for the church to be healthy. As mentioned before, this inward focus resulted in blindness to the community, blindness to other races, and blindness to other approaches.”²³

Missiology, according to Escobar, is “an interdisciplinary approach to understanding missionary action. Missiology examines missionary facts from the perspectives of the biblical sciences, theology, history and the social sciences. It aims to

²² Henry T. Blackaby and Avery T. Willis Jr., “On Mission with God,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Hawthorne and Steven C. Winter, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 77.

²³ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 56.

be systematic and critical, but it starts from a positive stance toward the legitimacy of the Christian missionary task as part of the fundamental reason for the being of the church.”²⁴

The church does not exist only to make individuals feel better about themselves, as some would suppose. It exists to share a greater story than its own; its purpose is to bring glory and honor to its Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It exists, as my mentor said in a conversation, to “bring renewal” to our community and existing congregation (see John 3:16-21; John 1:11-12).

Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:18-20 gives a clear picture of what the responsibility of the church at that time was to be. “He gave the church the power to preach to ‘all nations’ which in the Greek, the words for ‘all nations’ are *panta ta ethne*. We get our English word *ethnic* from the Greek word *ethne*. When we hear (or read) Jesus’ command to go to all nations, we think countries. But when Jesus spoke those words, there were no countries as we understand them today.”²⁵

One of the many reasons that the churches in America are in slow decline is due to the change of demographics in their communities. Where once the majority of the home owners in a neighborhood were Anglo-Saxon Americans, many in the Anglo group began to move out as soon as another people group began to move in. If that is the community where the local church has its congregation, then there can be an immediate decline; the church may close or it become another language church of the same denomination or affiliation. An example of that is a church in my region, where the congregation in 1970s to the 1990s was predominantly white with a very few African Americans and even fewer Hispanic Americans. At one point, the records show it grew

²⁴ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 21.

²⁵ Stetzer and Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 34.

into the 1980s and beyond. But as soon as the demographics in the neighborhood began to change, the people began to visit our other churches in the area, as well as other denominations. By 2000 the church had dwindled to a handful of elderly members who had been present since the founding of that church and had been instrumental in its initial start. They had all by 2001, died or transferred out to an area church. In 2002, a Spanish-language pastor was brought in, and he began the Spanish mission with his family and a couple of others. At present that local church has 79 covenant members with a weekly attendance into the low hundreds. It is a vibrant church with many young people who have a desire to worship the Lord, even to the point of sharing the gospel with others, as they go out every Sunday at 3 p.m. to witness to area families and in the parks. Then they gather again at the church at 6 p.m. to celebrate what God is doing through them.

There could be a problem in America in regard to integrated worship. As we are in a tumultuous political climate at present, we see division in the American populace in regards to such things as “Black Lives Matter,” “White Lives Matter,” “Build a Wall to Keep Rapists and Drug Runners Out,” and other rhetorical phraseology of the same kind. This is slowly sifting into the mainstream of Christianity as it begins a divide within the congregations. It is then, that people begin in search of a “homogeneous” church, and according to Webster’s New World Dictionary, “homogeneous is from the [Greek. *homos*, same + *genos*, kind] 1. Similar or identical in structure, quality, etc. 2. Composed of similar or identical parts.” When this people group or of a certain ethnicity find a church of their like kind and quality, they will most likely remain. There are diverse ethnicities moving into neighborhoods all across America, and this is creating a

“multiethnic” society, which when they start looking for a church will find a many-nations represented group.

While some like it, most seem not to be in agreement with “others” moving into their neighborhoods. In response to the question “Don’t you feel that integration can only be started and realized in the Christian church, not in schools or by other means?”, Martin Luther King Jr. responded, “We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America. At 11:00 on Sunday morning when we stand and sing and Christ has no east or west, we stand at the most segregated hour in this nation.”²⁶ Yet this is contrary to God’s purpose in sending his Son (Matthew 20:28; Revelation 7:9). God’s plan is articulated in John 3:16-17: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

Further, Jesus prayed (John 17:20-21), “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” There is a definite purpose for Jesus coming into the world and setting up his church. It was to do as he did while he was walking on earth.

²⁶ See Paul Edwards, “Sunday at 11: ‘The Most Segregated Hour in This Nation,’” The Center for the Study of God and Culture, October 9, 2010, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.godandculture.com/blog/sunday-at-11-the-most-segregated-hour-in-this-nation>. King made the comments in a question-and-answer session with faculty and students at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on December 18, 1963.

Conclusion: What the Church Should Be Doing

The church in America today, whether American Anglo, African American, Hispanic American, Hispanic immigrant, African immigrant, white immigrant, or any other nationality that is in the United States, has the responsibility to follow the instructions our Lord and Savior Jesus gave the early church. In John 17:13-23 are some key directives for the church at present. Jesus mentions that the Father has sent him. As he was sent by God the Father, so the people of the Christian faith, those of us who call ourselves Christians, should be out and about doing the work of the Lord, and that is sharing the gospel with all who will listen. This task is possibly the most necessary to help the church in America to survive the lackadaisical mindset that has gradually crept into our country and into our churches. The church should refocus and rekindle what it has lost. John the Revelator tells one of the seven churches in Asia: “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Revelation 2:4-5). In conclusion, the challenges of both the American church and the immigrant church are similar in many ways.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

This thesis-project attempts to ascertain the ingredient that is helping one people group advance exponentially in kingdom work and others not so exponentially, as well as research on what are the challenges each group seems to be facing. The desire is also to learn from each of these groups to assist them in their kingdom work assigned to them by their call.

General Methodology

I chose to survey a group of ten pastors who are all ministers within the Midwest/Rocky Mountain region of the Church of God of Prophecy, by sending them a ten-item questionnaire. Some of these questions were formed to produce qualitative data. These ten minister/pastors represent 30 percent of the pastors in the Midwest/Rocky Mountain region of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Study Participants

Each of the participants serves as lead pastor of a local church within the Midwest/Rocky Mountain region of the Church of God of Prophecy. Three participants are from Minnesota; three are from Iowa; two are from Nebraska; and two are from Colorado. The research focus was placed on ten different ministers and their local church congregations with special attention given to their particular understanding of the

questions which were presented to them. The participants are diverse and were very willing to participate. There are five Hispanics/Latinos, one from the United States; one from Guatemala; one from Panama; one from Mexico, and one from Honduras. There are two Anglo-Saxon Americans, one from Minnesota and one from Iowa. There is one African-American from Nebraska. There is one African, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, now residing in Iowa; and there is one woman of English Jamaican descent from Minnesota.

Their ages range from forty-seven to sixty-eight. The average age of the group is fifty-two years. Their years in pastoral ministry range from two and one-half years to forty years. Their pastoral tenure ranges from two-one half years to eighteen years.

I have been asked to explain in greater detail some of the questions by at least three of the participants. Each of the participants comes from a different ethnic group, and they each minister to various ethnically, culturally, racially, and nationally diverse congregations.

Study Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains questions which I felt were pertinent to this research. The questions were asked in the pastors' respective language, including to the African pastor, who speaks Swahili, French, and some English; his responses were translated by his high-school-age son into English.

Ten questions were asked in three different languages: English, Spanish, and Swahili. For continuity and transparency, the questions appear below in each language;

they also are included in appendix A. The responses in Spanish are ones I have translated into English, as I am fluent in both languages.

Study Procedure

Each participant was selected because of his or her involvement in pastoral ministry, tenure, and high interest in reaching the lost in America, regardless of their ethnicity. My first point of contact was by a phone call, as I call the pastors in the MWRMR monthly. During that call I let them know about my thesis-project and asked if they would be interested in being a participant. Then I sent them the consent form (see appendix B).

After they agreed, I emailed the questionnaire for the thesis-project and asked that they take their time. If they felt at any time that they no longer wanted to participate, they could let me know, and I would respect that decision. All of the responses to the questions were emailed back to me after they scanned the Word document, as well as their signature consent form. The only one who mailed the forms was the African pastor, as he was not able to scan his responses.

My goals are to have these ten participants, by reflection, help this research due to their close-knit connection with the various people groups whom they serve as ministry leader. The answers will be helpful in determining what can be done to assist both groups, the American church and the Immigrant church in America, with the MWRMR being the proving ground.

As we learn from this research what is the factor of progress, growth, or possible demise of each group, we will then be able to assist each group to overcome the various

challenges and barriers which keep them from being all they can be. This will be an evaluation of sorts to help us create a diagnostic tool for our area of ministry and within the Church of God of Prophecy in United States of America.

Questions and Responses

Question 1

How long have you been a pastor in the COGOP? ____at present church? ____

¿Cuánto hace que es pastor en el IDP? ¿____en la iglesia actual? ____

Umekua mchungaji kwa muda gani katika COGOP? ____kanisa la sasa? ____

Responses to Question 1

Participant 1: Twenty-three years, 14 years at present church

Participant 2: Thirteen years, 13 years at present church

Participant 3: Three years, 3 years at present church

Participant 4: Sixteen years, 16 years at present church

Participant 5: Forty years, 15 years at present church

Participant 6: Two and a half years, 2.5 years at present church

Participant 7: Five years, 5 years at present church

Participant 8: Thirty-four years, 12 years at present church

Participant 9: Twenty years, 20 years at present church

Participant 10: Twenty-seven years, 6 years at present church

The average number of years in pastoral ministry of these ten pastors is 18 years, and the average tenure of each at their local church as pastor is 10.5 years.

Question 2

In your opinion, is the growth factor of the Church in America and our region positive, stagnant, or negative? And why?

En su opinión, ¿es el factor de crecimiento de la iglesia en América y nuestra región en positivo, estancamiento o negativo? ¿Y por qué?

Kwa maoni yako, ni sababu ya ukujio wa Kanisa la Amerika na Mkoa wetu kwa chanya, chanya au hasi? Na kwa nini?

Responses to Question 2

Participant 1: The growth factor of the church in America and our region is negative and positive. In the 1970s it was reported that over 70% of all people attended church in America whereas today it is reported by Barna studies that over 70% of all people no longer attend church. In my opinion people don't attend church anymore because they feel that they don't need God right now. They have what they need in life and their main desire is satisfying their own fleshly desires. They have no fear of God and seem unconcerned about their eternal destiny, much like in the days of Noah. I do believe this will change in the future and people will once again to seek God. The growth factor of the church in American among the immigrants is positive as there appears to be a much greater growth rate among them than in the American church.

Participant 2: El factor de crecimiento de la Iglesia en América y nuestra Región es *positivo*. La razón es por *una buena motivación*.

The growth factor of the church in America and our region is *positive*. The reason is due to *good motivation*.

Participant 3: Kanisa ina Kua Kwa Chanya.

Its growing is positive. Because we got new members coming to join us.

Participant 4: En crecimiento en algunas, estancamiento en otras . . . y él porque es para comenzar con el que está al frente de la Iglesia (el Pastor), es muy importante que el pastor este seguro que fue Dios quien lo llamo, cuando estemos 100% seguros de esto vamos a enfrentar y vencer cualquier obstáculo que se presente (Mateo 16:18).

Growth in some, stagnant in others . . . and the reason begins with the one who is in front of the church: (the pastor) is very important that the pastor is sure that is was God who called him. When we are 100% sure of this we will confront and overcome any obstacle which presents itself (Matthew 16:18).

Participant 5: Estancamiento, porque hay falta de visión en el ministerio y falta de entendimiento de la diversidad de culturas.

Stagnant, because there is a lack of vision in the ministry and a lack of understanding the diversity among the cultures.

Participant 6: Church in America—I don't have a lot of visibility to growth numbers and where that growth is happening. From a general sense, it feels somewhat stagnant when compared to COGOP church growth outside the United States. Overall, US growth momentum seems much slower, if any, and as I've been conducting membership classes with new attendees of our church, who sometimes come from bigger organizations, they are often surprised by our numbers in the US for as long as we've existed compared with their former organization. I often share that our church presence is much more visible and recognizable in other regions of the country compared with the Midwest [Minnesota] in my case. As to why that is, hard to say. The advantages of some

of those regions where Christianity plays a strong role in politics, social and justice systems in general, garnering more receptivity of the gospel if they can remain relevant to the changing times.

Midwest region—based on limited view to overall growth patterns in the region. It would appear that there is growth, and growth is always positive. To the degree as to where that growth is occurring and is it consistent amongst the American church versus the immigrant church, I would assume that the immigrant church is growing at a faster, more consistent rate. There is a built-in DNA (values, beliefs, traditions, language, culture, work, family, norms) that comes with establishing and growing such immigrant churches.

Participant 7: I believe that we have grown with two ethnic groups which is a very good thing. It is very positive that souls are being saved and groups are added to the church.

Participant 8: The church growth can be any one of the three categories depending on each individual congregation and the leadership that they may have.

Participant 9: I feel that we are going in the right direction now. People have needs which the world cannot meet. We have a variety of people of all different cultures, great teachers, and active ministers and various ministries.

Participant 10: Los factores son muchos y variables en la Iglesia. Factores como: Conducta ética; Responsabilidad financiera; Responsabilidad personal; Ambiente del culto; Ayudes Sociales.

El factor es positivo en América y en nuestra Región. Estos factores son importantes.

Lo positivo: Tenemos la fuente de Autoridad, la Biblia (Doctrina).

Discipulados (Estudios Regionales, Capacitación)

Crecimiento en la Región (Iglesia), no solo en cantidad, sino calidad.

The factors are many and variable in the church. Factors such as ethical conduct; financial responsibility; personal responsibility; atmosphere in the church service; social helps.

The growth factor is positive in America and in our region. These factors are important:

The positive: We have the source of authority, the Bible (doctrine).

We have discipleship (regional studies, equipping).

The growth in the region (church) is not just in quantity but in quality.

Question 3

Do you see a difference in the growth of an immigrant congregation and an American congregation, and if so what do you think is the difference?

¿Ve usted una diferencia en el crecimiento de una congregación de inmigrantes y el crecimiento de una congregación estadounidense, y si es así, cuál cree usted que es la diferencia?

Je, unaona tofauti katika ukuaji wa kutaniko la wahamiaji na kukua kwa kutaniko la Amerika, na kama ni hivyo unadhani no tofauti gani?

Responses to Question 3

Participant 1: I do see a difference in the growth of an immigrant congregation and an American congregation. Immigrant congregations appear to be growing much more easily and much more quickly than American congregations. We have seen it in my own church with the African church that uses our building on Sunday afternoons. In my opinion, the difference is that the immigrant congregation has a greater hunger for God for their basic day-to-day necessities and even their own safety in countries that they migrated from. To the immigrant congregation, God is the supplier of all their needs, and their recognition of this creates within them a desire to worship and praise God with other believers.

Participant 2: La cultura.

The culture.

Participant 3: Kanisa la wahamiaji lina kua kuliko kanisa la Amerika.

The immigrant congregation grows faster than the American because many immigrant youth came in church, but the American youth are less.

Participant 4: A mi parecer, no quiero sonar grosero con mis hermanos en Cristo, pero hay conformismo. Por ejemplo: Sé que el ser bi-vocacional es críticamente necesario en muchos casos, pero cuando el Señor no ha llamado a vivir por fe, es importante que le obedezcamos (Mateo 6:26, 34) este hecho nos priva de ver la provisión divina en muchas áreas de nuestro ministerio.

It seems to me, and I don't want to sound critical of my brothers in Christ, but there is a sense of conformism. For example: I know that to be bi-vocational is critically necessary in many cases, but when the Lord has called us to live by faith, it is important

that we obey him (Matthew 6:26, 34). This allows us to see his divine provision in many areas of our ministry.

Participant 5: Si. Porque un inmigrante viene a los EU por necesidades dependiendo en Dios, y se refugian en las iglesias en busca de ayudas. Mientras, el estadounidense esta comfortable en su propio país.

Yes. Because the immigrant comes to the US due to his needs and depends on God, so they find refuge in the church as they seek help. While the American is comfortable in his own country.

Participant 6: Yes. I think an influence to immigrant congregations is as mentioned in above with the built-in DNA. It just makes it easier for people to come together, understand context as the Word is being applied. Speed of assimilation (unity, feel part of the body and readily accepted and embraced) is so much faster and enhances growth and outreach efforts—that bond between people can be so significant as opposed to the church doctrine and beliefs (easily accepted, even if not completely understood). I'm referring to my growing up in the church, which was primarily a Jamaican church while I was in England, and that culture dominated my understanding of God's Word.

Participant 7: The difference in the growth of our two immigrant groups and the American group is that the immigrant groups, whether African or Hispanic, come to this country having very little or nothing and are totally dependent of God to help. It is a social-economic problem/hardship as they turn to God and find the church there with arms open wide with the love of God and willing to help.

At some point the American congregation was in the same situation but now a step above the poverty line and doing better socially and economically, so now that the

older generation is passing, the younger one does not see or feel the need to be connected to church or God.

Participant 8: The immigrant congregation seems to have a focus on God helping them to make it in this country. They will share their faith with others and invite people to their services, while in the American congregation the urgency of sharing the gospel seems to be less.

Participant 9: Yes. The difference is cultural where people of the same background and language are drawn together. People want to connect, they want familiarity. We have found that we have people who are in our congregation that are in an interracial relationship and now they are accepted by us and our congregation. I always say that we are not a Jamaican church, black church, white church, a native American church. But we are God's church.

Participant 10: La diferencia es que se ha perdido: liderazgo con visión; metas alcanzables; Entusiasmo; Desarrollo de ministerio; Planificación de sus servicios (cultos).

The difference is that something has been lost: leadership with vision; reachable goals; enthusiasm; ministry development; planning of the services.

Question 4

In your opinion, what do you think is the ingredient in the American church that is helping or hurting its growth?

En su opinión, ¿cuál cree usted que es el ingrediente de la iglesia Americana que está ayudando o perjudicando su crecimiento?

Kwa maoni yako, unadhani ni nini kiungo kilichopatikana katika kanisa la Amerika ambalo linasaidia a kuumiza ukuaji wake?

Responses to Question 4

Participant 1: The ingredient that is found in the American church that is hurting its growth in my personal opinion is that the church has placed a much greater emphasis on building ministry instead of outreach ministry. It's all about what is happening in the building instead of outside of the building. We try to come up with compelling programs that will attract the eye and bring in outsiders, but they still do not come in. Yes, we do need programs that will help us disciple those who come into our church, but my concern is that we are trying to use the programs as a means to grow the church when the biblical mandate was to go out in the highways and byways and compel them to come in. If we want our churches to grow, we must start becoming more outreach-oriented and teaching our people how to witness and share the faith. This will give them courage and confidence to step forward and do so. Each of the ministries in the church should be promoting outreach within their own ministry. Outreach should be the main focus for church growth and should be part of the church mission statement.

Participant 2: No answer (left blank)

Participant 3: Vijana wa Marekani nawakuji kwa kamisa sana.

I think the American church focuses more on administration, yet should focus on the spiritual life, which Americans and youth don't participate

Participant 4: La falta de visión más allá de raza y lenguaje.

The lack of vision further than race or language.

Participant 5: El comfortable.

They are comfortable.

Participant 6: Sometimes seems to be a barrier to broaching the topic of a faith and a relationship with God when it comes to Americans because of the societal shift from “everyone goes to church” to “just do what makes you happy.” The values around attending church or being part of a church family are not like they used to be. I feel there are many options to accommodate people’s lifestyles, so that commitment is not necessary. Our ability to be relevant in today’s changing and challenging times will help us in our growth. Unfortunately, most don’t have the tools or resources to stay on top of what is happening around us and how we can reach people where they are instead of waiting for them to show up at our doors. Last SOPAS—“Church with Impact”—was an excellent session to get those conversations going. Really appreciated the region encouraging leaders to attend. Now it’s the execution part of taking what is learned and applying it (holding people accountable), being bold and courageous to make the changes. I feel it’s easy to get excited about the learnings, but then we fall back into the same habits and comfort zone.

Participant 7: We have to change with the times, have an updated message for an up-to-date people. We must be up on current events and be able to communicate to the congregation the Bible view from the Word of God on the subject matter. We have to get out of the four walls of the church and visit. Getting out into the community works for other groups, and it will work for us.

Participant 8: Prosperity seems to be so prevalent that the need to call on God is not as urgent.

Participant 9: In some ways we have not released some of the old ways and have not embraced some new ways. When moving ministry from one church to another or new field, there should be a proper exit plan. Help: That there be a pool of ministry (regional/national) where pastors/overseers can look up contacts and resume, experience and/or upcoming minister to choose from and offer opportunity (plus a three-month living expense or depending upon the area).

Participant 10: Los ingredientes qué están ayudando son: Oración; Eventos Evangelísticos; Conocer las necesidades de la Iglesia y la comunidad; No escatimar esfuerzo; El Compromiso con el Señor.

Lo qué está perjudicando: Se ha perdido la esencia del compromiso con el Señor, y se ha vuelto a costumbre, están en lo mismo.

The ingredients that are helping are prayer; evangelistic events; knowing the needs of the church and the community; not cutting back on thrusts; and the compromise made with the Lord.

What is hurting: A sense of essence of their commitment to the Lord has been lost, and has turned or become a habit, and they continue in the same.

Question 5

In your opinion, what do you think is the ingredient in the immigrant church that is helping or hurting its growth?

En su opinión, ¿cuál cree usted que es el ingrediente de la iglesia inmigrante que está ayudando o perjudicando su crecimiento?

Kwa maoni yako, unadhani ni nini kiungo katika kanisa la uhamiaji ambayo ni kusaidia au kuumiza ukuaji wake?

Responses to Question 5

Participant 1: The ingredient in the immigrant church that is helping its growth is, in my opinion, their positive view of attending church. To them church is a place where we come to worship God—God has been so good to us providing for our every need. They don't come to church out of just habit or routine but because they really want to be there to worship God. Whereas most Americans cannot even be coaxed into attending church, the immigrants welcome the opportunity to attend church.

Participant 2: Perjudicando su crecimiento. Documentación legal.

Legal documentation is what is hurting their growth.

Participant 3: I think the American church focus,

Participant 4: Sobre todo, la mano de Dios con nosotros que ha hecho posible el crecimiento demográfico de latinos en nuestra área.

Above all, the hand of God with us has made it possible in the demographic growth of Latinos in our area.

Participant 5: La necesidad.

The need.

Participant 6: Immigrant churches seem to be naturally more outspoken about their church faith and belief to attract others. In some cases, depending where they come from, they've grown up believing in the supernatural in one way or another. Seeing the

world more than in its physical and natural nature. I admire the level of respect for the Word, people, leadership, worship and giving, which sometimes overrides hurt feelings.

Hurting growth: ability to expand their reach and influence outside of their culture/ethnicity.

Participant 7: They have a thirst and a hunger for God that the American church has misplaced or lost. From what I can see there's not too much hurting the growth of the immigrant, if anything it would be the documentation they all need to come out of the closet into the light to be able to have better jobs and security they do not have now.

Participant 8: Not sure

Participant 9: Working together not only in church projects but community and social activities. For the English speaking people to learn Spanish, and the Spanish speaking people to learn English, and that to be taught by each group.

Participant 10: El crecimiento en las iglesias de inmigrantes; inmigrantes, documentados, e indocumentados, ellos llegan a la ciudades grandes y pequeñas y forman comunidades, se vuelven un fenómeno, local comercial cerrados se transforman en iglesias.

Viene de Centro-América con una experiencia religiosa o Cristiana, y al juntarse en Estados Unidos, entienden que es mucho más fácil organizarse (juntarse) y de ahí, los pastores ayudan con programas sociales, o a buscarles trabajo, vivienda, ropa, comida etc.

La diferencia: Vienen con sueños, esperanza, temores, y El inmigrante busca a Dios su única esperanza.

Growth in immigrant churches; immigrants, documented, and undocumented, they arrive in large and small cities and form communities, they become a phenomenon, closed commercial premises are transformed into churches.

They come from Central America with a religious or Christian experience, and when they get together in the United States, they understand that it is much easier to get organized (together) and from there, pastors help with social programs, or find work, housing, clothes, food, etc.

The difference: They come with dreams, hope, fears, and the immigrant seeks God, their only hope.

Question 6

What can be gleaned from either group's DNA that could be beneficial to each one?

¿Qué se puede deducir del ADN de cualquier grupo que pueda ser beneficioso para cada uno?

Ni nini kinachoweza kupatikana kutoka kwa DNA au kikundi ambacho kinaweza kuwa na manufaa kwa kila mmoja?

Responses to Question 6

Participant 1: From the immigrant church, I believe we could glean some things that would be beneficial to the American church. First of all, we could glean from their positive view of attending church. They look at attending church as an opportunity to praise the God who has been so good to them and thus they come to worship with the

joyful spirit. Second of all, we could glean from their sincere way of worship. When they sing, they shout and are very vocal in their worship of God, and because of the sincerity of their worship, God manifests his presence in a powerful way in their services. This brings the anointing and prepares their hearts to receive the word of God. Third of all, we can glean from their trust in God. Whereas the American church relies more on committees to find answers, the immigrant church relies more on God's guidance for the answers to prayer.

From the American church, I believe the immigrant church could learn some things. First of all, they could glean how to set up proper leadership in the church. The church needs ushers and children's ministry workers and youth workers, etc., who need to be trained and equipped for service. Without trained leadership in place, the people will not be properly led and there will be chaos. Second of all, how to maintain and take care of the church building. The American church sets up volunteers and properly trains them on how to clean the church. Those with skills come together and do repairs on the building to keep it properly maintained. To the American church, how the property looks is a direct reflection of the church.

Participant 2: No answer

Participant 3: No answer

Participant 4: No answer

Participant 5: Reconocer que dependemos en Dios y que el Señor viene pronto.

Recognize that we depend on God and the Lord soon returns.

Participant 6: *Immigrant churches*: Power of unity, fellowship, resilience when things become challenging, values and beliefs that result in strong momentum and

excitement for God's work. Sense of freedom to fully express their identity with Christ. Life challenges are easily shared, comforted, and resolved by each other.

American churches: Ability to recognize and value differences, openness to welcome and accommodate those outside of their ethnic group, eagerness to learn and adapt to changing needs in one's society.

Participant 7: No answer

Participant 8: I do not understand the question.

Participant 9: No answer

Participant 10: Su función es guardar información: es decir, contiene las instrucciones que determinan, la forma y característica de un organismo y sus funciones. A cada uno de nosotros, tenemos que tener todo lo que Dios y su palabra nos da, sus instrucciones nos van ayudar en este organismo y función.

Its function is to keep information: that is to say, it contains the instructions that determine the form and characteristics of an organism and its functions. Each one of us has to have all God and his word gives us. Its instructions will help us in this organism's function.

Question 7

What could we do to assist the immigrant church in its work in the kingdom?

¿Qué podemos hacer para ayudar a la iglesia inmigrante en su trabajo en el Reino?

Tunaweza kufanya nini ili kusaidia kanisa la wahamiaji katika kazi yake katika ufalme?

Responses to Question 7

Participant 1: The immigrant church would be greatly assisted through leadership training that would instruct them on the roles of ushers, children's church workers, youth workers, etc., in the church. Assisting them in developing a mission statement would be beneficial, and steps they could take to fulfill it. Also, solid biblical teaching on the importance of giving would be beneficial for them and how they can be blessed by their giving.

Participant 2: Apoyar.

Support.

Participant 3: Kuisadia kwa upande wa sheria.

More help in administration area.

Participant 4: Orar porque está bajo persecución . . . leyes de inmigración.

Capacitación es una inversión en la Iglesia inmigrante.

Pray because it is under persecution . . . immigration laws.

Development is an investment in the immigrant church.

Participant 5: Capacitar, entrenar con amor a la cosecha.

Equip, train with love towards the harvest.

Participant 6: Have a more inclusive approach to ministry—expand their reach and influence to members of other groups. How to do it successfully, and the benefits as it represents the body of Christ being one (multiethnic/multicultural). It takes work, patience, and accommodations—not from a gospel perspective but more from cultural practices, values and beliefs, perspective; being appreciated and valued in the whole body as opposed to those culture and values “dominating” the body.

Participant 7: Hard question, because I'm only guessing on most of my opinion when I speak of the immigrants because we don't really know them. We don't know what their lifestyle consists of each day and what they have to go through each day. I can only, with any true meaning, speak to the American congregation, and we need to press on in Jesus' name. Get outside the church, meet and invite people to church, and invite people to know Jesus Christ.

Participant 8: Training of leadership so as to disciple the congregation to become more biblical and less national.

Participant 9: We can offer sponsorship help with legal matters, such as an immigration, green cards; this will help in working in the communities.

Participant 10: This participant combined questions seven and eight.

Question 8

What could we do to assist the American church in its work in the kingdom?

¿Qué podemos hacer para ayudar a la iglesia americana en su trabajo en el Reino?

Tunaweza kufanya nini ili kusaidia kanisa la Marekani katika kazi yake katika ufalme?

Responses to Question 8

Participant 1: The American church would be greatly assisted by setting up a network in the region that would list those who would be available to come to a church and help with a particular ministry such as youth, children, or music ministry. Available ministers to hold revivals or fill in for pastors would also be beneficial. Maybe

connecting our pastors with someone who has been successful in church growth would give our pastors ideas that they could use to help build their own churches.

Participant 2: Apoyar.

Support.

Participant 3: Kuisaidia kwa upande wa ki roho.

More help in the spiritual area.

Participant 4: Orar por ellos . . . porque también están bajo persecución espiritual.

Involucrar más en el servicio con otros hermanos de otro color y lenguaje. La Biblia dice que Dios formo una sola Raza . . . La Humana.

Pray for them because they also are under persecution . . . spiritual.

Get more involved in the services with brethren of other color or language.

The Bible says that God formed one race . . . the human race.

Participant 5: Hacerles saber que los necesitamos para juntos trabajar para la cosecha e intercambiar ideas para juntos enfocados en la cosecha.

Letting them know that we need them so that together we can work in the harvest and exchange ideas so together we can focus on the harvest.

Participant 6: Assessing and training leadership—stronger leadership capabilities in terms of how to be a unifying force in our communities. What does that mean, what does it look like? How to partner with other denominational leaders to advance the kingdom. Seeking ways to partner and support each other and not be in competition with each other. I think as a whole, we have difficulty naturally partnering with our sister COGOP churches, so may find it harder to build partnerships outside of our organization. There are so many societal issues at play right now social justice, LGTBQA+, racism,

abuse, sexual abuse, politics, and immigration. How do we remain relevant and have an impact in the communities we help shepherd? We may not be able to handle all these issues on our own, but it could serve as a means to partner with other church organizations to help confront and influence the issues in a biblical manner. I identified leadership capabilities only because it's normally the position that is on the front lines of advancing God's work in his/her area. There are certainly many more ways to assist. I'm sharing based on my purview and personal challenges.

Participant 7: I think the immigrant church can help us in the kingdom work . . . they work hard at reaching others for Christ and praying and seek the Lord for souls.

Participant 8: Leadership that displays a true heart seeking to align the church to the principles and purposes of God.

Participant 9: Establishing more relationships in the business community, church community, nursing home community, community outreach, food.

Participant 10: A Disneyland se la conoce como el "Reino Mágico." A sus empleados se les recalca una virtud por encima de todos los demás porque es la que pone la Magia en ese reino "El Servicio."

Se les enseña que el momento en que entran por las puertas, "están sirviendo."

Tienen que tratar a los visitantes como si fueran sus invitados personales.

Lo que nos puede ayudar a los inmigrantes y a la Iglesia Americana, es cuando representas el Reino de Dios debiéramos hacer lo imposible para ayudar a la gente, amarla, satisfacer sus necesidades.

¿Porque? Porque Jesús, que es el Rey en ese Reino, dijo- *"El que quiere hacerse grande entre vosotros, será vuestro servidor"* (Marcos 10:43).

Disneyland is known as the “Magic Kingdom.” Its employees are reminded of a virtue above the others, since this is what places the “magic” in that kingdom, “service.” They are taught that at the very moment they enter the doors, they “are serving.” They have to treat the visitors as if they were their special guests.

What can help the immigrants and the American church is when you represent the kingdom of God, we should do the impossible to help the people, love them, satisfy their needs.

Why? Because Jesus, who is the king of this kingdom, said, “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:43).

Question 9

Do you consider your ministry

- a. Homogeneous (same race)
- b. Ethnic (a member of an ethnic minority)
- c. Multiethnic (relating to or constituting several ethnic groups)?

¿Considera su ministerio:?

- a. Homogéneo (misma raza)
- b. Etnico-(miembro de una minoría étnica)
- c. Multiétnico-(¿en relación con o constitutivo de varios grupos étnicos)?

Je, unazingatia huduma yako:

- a. Homogeneous (sawa mbio)
- b. Kikabila- (mwanachama wa wachache wa kabila)
- c. Au Multi-kikabila-(kuhusiana na au kuunda makundi kadhaa ya kikabila)?

Responses to Question 9

Participant 1: I consider my ministry homogeneous.

Participant 2: c. Multiétnico

c. Multiethnic

Participant 3: a. sawa mbio

a. Homogeneous

Participant 4: Multiétnico

Multiethnic

Participant 5: Multiétnico

Multiethnic

Participant 6: Multiethnic

Participant 7: Multiethnic—it's a multicultural church ever growing and wanting to impact our community.

Participant 8: Multiethnic

Participant 9: Multiethnic

Participant 10: Homogéneo

Homogeneous

Question 10

What ethnic/nationality group or groups do you minister to?

¿A qué grupo étnico/nacionalidad o grupos usted Ministra?

Ni kikundi gani au kikundi cha kitaifa au vikundi unayotumikia?

Responses to Question 10

Participant 1: I minister to whites and African Americans.

Participant 2: Hispanos; Americanos

Hispanic and American Hispanic

Participant 3: Sawambio

African (homogeneous)

Participant 4: Latinos. Hispanos

Latins. Hispanics.

Participant 5: Guatemaltecos; Salvadoreños; Hondureños; Colombianos;

Americanos; Venezolanos; Mejicanos

Guatemalans; Salvadorans; Hondurans; Colombians; Americans; Venezuelans;

Mexicans

Participant 6: Caucasian; Afro-Americans; Hispanics

Participant 7: Whites; Blacks; Hispanics; Native Americans

Participant 8: I minister to Salvadorian, Guatemalan, Mexican, Mexican

American, and Anglo.

Participant 9: Multiethnic

Participant 10: Hispanos

Hispanics

Summary

These participants answered questions that will be a help in discerning what is needed for each group to excel in kingdom work. They answered in a positive light, in

view of their particular location, setting, and church constituency. Discoveries were made by them that will also assist them in their venture to promote the gospel among the various ethnic groups which are filling our cities within our region.

Instead of changing locations, as has been the pattern in the past due to demographics, I believe that these questions have provided good information about what is needed to accomplish the work in the harvest field that is around us.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis-project was to look into the growth challenges that the immigrant church in America has, as well as the growth challenges the American church has. Several questions were asked to the ten pastors across the Midwest Rocky Mountain Region of the Church of God of Prophecy, which includes Colorado; Nebraska; Iowa; and Minnesota. Each one of these pastors answered the questions in the language in which he preaches, as well as in reference to the ethnic group(s) to which he ministers.

Outcomes

The responses from the pastors were revealing, in that it seems they have a formed opinion of each other's challenges, as well as being able in contrast to recognize some of their own challenges. The questions asked were to cause an internal view of themselves, as well as an external view of those with whom they were acquainted as the opposite group questioned. This they did well, and they brought out some points that were similar as well as some that were different and possibly unseen by the other group.

Demographics

The age range of the participants was from forty-seven years to sixty-eight years old. Five pastors are Hispanic, two are Anglo-Saxon, one is African American, and one is African. There were one female participant and nine male participants; they are from four

states in the region I supervise. Six of these participants were born outside the United States, while four were born in the United States. The time span of tenure in pastoral ministry varies from two and half years to forty years. The pastoral tenure of each varies from two and a half years to twenty years. The demographic makeup of this group gives a wide range and scope of growth patterns that these particular individuals are involved with.

Responses from Participants

Overall it seems that the responses from the participants are varied. They view the growth patterns of the church in America as positive as far as their knowledge. The growth visibility by each of these pastors is limited to the areas in which they minister. And as I can tell, the response is indicative of their positions. The immigrant pastors view it somewhat differently than the American pastors.

I will review the responses from the participants by individual questions. The participants did their best in responding to the questions by giving an insightful look at how they are doing in ministry and their ethnic groups' shortcomings and what they could do to better the situation of church growth, not only in their group but also in the opposite group.

Question 1: How Long Have You Been a Pastor in the COGOP? at Present Church?

In regard to the tenure of the pastors who participated in this survey, tenure varies from two and half years to twenty years at their present church. The growth of a particular church was not always in line with the tenure of the pastor. The pastor with the

least amount of years at a particular church had increased growth more than the pastor with the most years at a local church. It seems that tenure is not a factor in growth, at least not in the group I questioned, and it seems that the tenure of some pastors could contribute to less growth or hinder its growth.

In summary, the excitement and enthusiasm of the first-time pastors at the local church seem to be a point of reference, as they seem to have the churches that are showing growing the most. The English pastors as well as the Spanish pastors seem to have the same enthusiasm and spurt of growth, due to their first appointment. Also among those pastors in their first appointment, the ones surveyed were ministering to various nationalities and cultural groups.

In an attempt to help pastors keep their “first love” experience, I think it would be good for the pastors to have a yearly continuing education class to review their experience as a new pastor and to help mentor a new pastor coming into the pastoral ministry. I think something in this line would refresh and spark anew what they felt at their first pastorate, and what they feel now could be adjusted to that.

It is also possible that according to this questionnaire and given the tenure of these pastors at their present church, a graph could be drawn up as to the progress and high times and low times, which can be viewed by reading their monthly reports that come into my office, as we have a tendency in our denomination to leave a pastor as long as he wants to be there, while yet realizing his record is not holding a good growth rate.

Question 2: In Your Opinion, Is the Growth Factor of the Church in America and Our Region Positive, Stagnant, or Negative? Why?

The pastors with longer tenure at their local church recognize that in the churches which are stagnant or negative in growth, it is leadership direction and vision that are lacking. As for the ones who view growth as positive, it is mainly positive among immigrant and other people groups. One participant said, “To the degree as to where the growth is occurring and is it consistent amongst the American church versus the immigrant church, I would assume that the immigrant church is growing at a faster, more consistent rate. There is a built-in DNA (values, beliefs, traditions, language, culture work, family, norms) that comes with establishing and growing such immigrant churches.” As another participant stated that growth can be any of the three factors mentioned, depending on the church’s leadership and each individual congregation.

In reading these responses from the various pastors, which I deem to be optimistic and positive in their views of our church growth, I can see that leadership development is key in equipping the pastor, not to do solo work but, as the apostle Paul stated, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11-12, New International Version). What I can see is that we must better equip the pastors to better equip and develop leaders and a congregation to witness the gospel to all their friends and others. This good news is to be shared by each and every born-again Christian.

Question 3: Do You See a Difference in the Growth of an Immigrant Congregation and an American Congregation, and If So, What Do You Think Is the Difference?

The view expressed by the participants is that they see a difference between both congregations. They all agree that the growth cycle is visible and that congregants of the immigrant churches enter the United States with a hunger for God, knowing that he is the only one who can supply their immediate needs. Immigrants come to this country, as one participant stated, “having very little or nothing and are totally dependent on God to help. It is a socio-economic problem/hardship as they turn to God and find the church here with arms open wide, with the love of God and willing to help.” They come to church, where they have peers from their countries who share the same language, culture, family values, and belief system that they had in their country of origin.

One participant noted that the immigrant church shows a sense of urgency to share the gospel, while the American church seems to have lost its way in sharing the good news. The sentiment I gleaned from the participants is that the American church has become complacent and comfortable in itself, and leaders have lost vision, reachable goals, enthusiasm, ministry development, and planning of the services.

In summary, a renewal process is a necessary undertaking that the American church has to undergo in order to break out of its deep slumber that the enemy of our souls has caused. The American churches’ Sundays are now filled with sports and self-indulgence in whatever seems to be the fad of the season (e.g., swimming, fishing, hunting, and every other pastime) that has its good points. However, too much of a good thing can ruin easily if taken to the extreme, as it has in this particular situation.

One participant noted in reference to the immigrant church that the “speed of assimilation (unity, feel part of the body and readily accepted and embraced) is so much faster and enhances growth and outreach efforts; and that bond between people can be so significant as opposed to the church doctrine and beliefs (easily accepted, even if not completely understood).”

If we can apply the same zeal in the American church that is evident in the immigrant church, as far as their desire and enthusiasm to share the good news, and to be disciplined disciples, then the American church could be as vibrant and healthy as the immigrant church, creating a sincere desire to gather to worship together come rain or shine.

Question 4: In Your Opinion, What Do You Think Is the Ingredient in the American Church That Is Helping or Hurting Its Growth?

The answers from the participants were along the same line, which came down to the American way of thinking, which includes property and possessions. The American church is more concerned with doing church in its building rather than promoting the gospel outside the building. Being comfortable is a cause recognized for the American church being hindered in its growth, alongside a lack of vision and an ability to be relevant in today’s changing and challenging times. Prosperity within the church congregants is so prevalent that there seems to be no need to call upon God, as one participant said.

In summary, it would be good to look into history and review what the early church in America did as its members were the immigrants coming to this country for

religious freedom and financial gain. Although the right to worship freely was the main reason many came, yet others came to scour the newfound land for its minerals and goods. If the American church would focus on the importance of being the church, it would benefit more than seeking gain and wealth.

The state of complacency is one of the most detrimental ingredients that hurt the American church. They have fine buildings, with air conditioning, heat, a sound system, worship directors, and musicians. They have the best teachers, preachers, children's and youth directors who have every modern gadget available for them to make church fun and easier to attend.

And all of these things could be a hindrance to its growth, as today's generation is looking for truths plain and simple, and not a Hollywood-style church service. Those who are looking will find the Hollywood-style church services, as just another of the many programs that call attention to whatever they are promoting.

Question 5: In Your Opinion, What Do You Think Is the Ingredient in the Immigrant Church That Is Helping or Hurting Its Growth?

One of the many things that the participants noted was how both groups view church attendance. The immigrant wants to come to church to worship God knowing how good he has been to them, while most Americans have to be coaxed into attending church, as one participant observed (this person happens to be a pastor of an American congregation).

I think that the desire to attend church is an ingredient that needs to be nurtured in the American church. A renewal of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ would be an

enormous addition to the hearts and lives of American congregants, at least those who have lost it. Immigrants have dreams as they come to this country, dreams of making it a home and a dream of making this the place to worship and raise their families.

What hurts immigrants' growth is their need to find employment, the immediate need to house their families or to provide for their family left behind in their country of origin. The lack of documentation is yet another factor that hinders the immigrant churches' growth, as there is an all-out effort to rid this country of undocumented people, Christian or not. What will help the immigrant church is to assimilate into American culture, but without forgetting their God and having other gods before them, such as money, possessions, property, fame, or position.

In order to keep growing and expanding, the immigrant church has to reach other people groups and cultures and move into a bilingual program that will help them keep their children and youth as they take English as a first language. As we can see in the churches I supervise, the second- and third-generation Hispanics speak more English than Spanish, and could come to the point that some will possibly start attending English-speaking churches if they do not understand what is being preached.

One of the things that deters some immigrant churches is the legalistic doctrines that they have learned outside the United States, where it is a well-known understanding that the United States is a libertine country where everything goes, or so is the message abroad, and due to that thought or mindset, they teach that here and keep out those who are trying to come in to their congregations.

Question 6: What Can Be Gleaned from Either Group's DNA That Could Be Beneficial to Each One?

The immigrant church would benefit from learning how the American church does business administration, property/building maintenance, and programs and services geared to the day, time, and season in which it is. The various celebrations that we do in the United States are not viewed or taken too lightly with people from other countries. Many immigrants are taught in the churches in their country that just about everything the American Christian church does comes from pagan history and practices. This is a turn-off for many who attempt to attend their services, until things like this are brought up. The immigrant church could glean from the American church a sense of punctuality, as they are not clock watchers.

The American church could glean from the immigrant churches hunger for God and a deep desire to worship him as long as they can, where this is proven by the singing that goes on at a normal immigrant church service (they can sing for an hour or more). The American church can make some adjustments yet attempt to seek God during the worship service and receive what God wants to gift his worshippers as they worship. The American church can learn to acquire the love and hunger for God that they once had in their born-again experience.

Question 7: What Could We Do to Assist the Immigrant Church in Its Work in the Kingdom?

Providing leadership development classes can equip immigrant church leaders, so they can equip their congregation as well. It also would be helpful to assist them with the

rules and regulations about insurance, child protection, and domestic situations.

Providing training and resources in the language of the immigrant will assist them in the leadership capacity to which they have been appointed as “overseers to feed the flock of God” (Acts 20:28).

To assist the immigrant church, we must teach the principles of stewardship and discipleship, as well as seminars on marriage and child care. Immigrants need to know that life in the United States can be lived in an honest and forthright way, keeping every detail of their presence here on the table. If they crossed illegally, they can begin a process of correct and legal documentation which will assist them with better jobs and better opportunities for their family and can remove the fear of deportation and allow them to freely serve and worship God.

Question 8: What Could We Do to Assist the American Church in Its Work in the Kingdom?

A way to assist American churches is to provide leadership classes so the leaders can equip the congregation to share the gospel with all their friends and people they know and possibly do not know. It is important that a pastor be prepared to deliver the gospel message to the local church which he has been called to lead. Pastors must be reminded that the focus of Sunday is to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:21 tells us: “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed.” As Hollis L. Green puts it,

This is an age of speedy change. Unless local churches emerge from the over-protected, over-programmed policies and become locally and internally motivated, very little progress can be accomplished. Local initiative must be brought to bear against the reality of its local problems. Laymen and clergy alike

must encounter the contemporary problems of their society, make local decisions, develop their own financial responsibilities and to some degree, become aware of their own self-hood. When this happens, the church can be dynamic and reach its full potential.¹

Question 9: Do You Consider Your Ministry a. Homogeneous (Same Race), b. Ethnic (a Member of an Ethnic Minority), or c. Multiethnic (Relating to or Constituting Several Ethnic Groups)?

There is no doubt that unless the homogenous churches begin to work in the multiethnic society, they will eventually die out. The proof is in the demographics: the various people groups moving into neighborhoods who do not look like the people who have a church there. I realize that language is a barrier that must be crossed, but with the young children and youth of the immigrants in the neighborhoods, a bilingual service can be accomplished, if the congregation chooses to reach out instead of dying out.

I have ethnic churches in my area of supervision, and they pride themselves on whatever country they are from and will minister only to their countrymen, as others, in their view, do not understand their style. As I visit with these groups, I can see their lack of growth because of their lack of a vision that tells us people from all over the world are at our doorstep. We need to bring people to an understanding that Jesus does not discriminate due to color, race, language, social status, or nationality.

Question 10: What Ethnic/Nationality Group or Groups Do You Minister To?

This is an open question, as most of the participants in this study minister to different people groups. Some of these churches have as many as six to seven ethnic

¹ Hollis L. Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 148.

groups that attend their churches. Some of these churches minister to ten to twelve nationalities in their local congregations.

What I see is that the ones who minister to several ethnic groups are growing, as they minister to each other in the way they are accustomed to. Multiethnic groups are growing in our churches because of the many people groups who have family and friends of that group. People are invited to events and special celebrations, and this is an outreach that these groups do. It seems to be working. It is like casting a net into the sea: whatever is in the sea will be captured by the net, and the fisherman will make good of the catch, whether lobster, salmon, or catfish.

Conclusion

This thesis-project has been in my heart for a good while, and putting it together has helped me glean some pertinent information. One of the many things I have learned is that both American and immigrant groups feel that they can learn from each other. They want each other's help in the promulgation of the gospel, as well as to learn about diverse cultures and how to better address and serve them.

I can also see that there is denial on the part of both groups, as they tend to place blame on situations that bring difficulty to them instead of addressing the issue and finding a solution. For example, the African children in one of our churches are not participating in the worship service and are talking or outside playing. What could help this group would be to ask the American church children's ministry department to come in and train children's workers to teach, train, and have a Children's church service at the level of the children present.

The American church and the immigrant church in America, are on opposite sides of the pendulum. While American church basks in its comfort, the immigrant church is struggling to make ends meet and yet have church. As several of the participants responded, immigrants come here and realize their need for God, and that need for God compels them to search for a people of their like, kind, and quality, to join and grow in the knowledge of how to feed their need for God.

As immigrants begin to prosper and blessings begin to enter their lives, one of the things that they must not do is to lose sight of God and allow themselves to be captured by the god of materialism, which then leads to a self-seeking life apart from God. The world must not dictate to the Christian what he needs. The Bible is our road map, and since we have asked for God's help, we must heed his word as it speaks to us and allow his word as it guides us. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:1-2).

Recommendations

- It would be very helpful to have a listening retreat where both groups could discuss the topics affecting or challenging them in the promulgation of the gospel.
- Have focus groups within each of the various cultures, to bring insight on what is going on in their local churches to either promote the gospel or why

are they not doing so, as well as focus on issues and problems within.

- Knowing their demographics within the local churches area would be a valuable and wise investment, as this could enlarge their focus.
- In recognizing the need to be multiethnic, it would be an advantage to bring a “Cultural Intelligence, Awareness, and Sensitivity” class to the region.
- Have one of our own pastors within the region speak about what is helping his local church to have the growth they are having, instead of bringing in a megachurch pastor.

APPENDIX A
STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions sent to participants in English

1. How long have you been a pastor in the COGOP? at present church?
2. In your opinion, is the growth factor of the Church in America and our Region in positive, stagnant or negative? And why?
3. Do you see a difference in the growth of an immigrant congregation and an American congregation's growth, and if so what do you think is the difference?
4. In your opinion, what do you think is the ingredient found in the American church that is helping or hurting its growth?
5. In your opinion, what do you think is the ingredient in the immigrant church that is helping or hurting its growth?
6. What can be gleaned from either group's DNA that could be beneficial to each one?
7. What could we do to assist the immigrant church in its work in the kingdom?
8. What could we do to assist the American church in its work in the kingdom?
9. Do you consider your ministry:
 - a. Homogeneous (same race)
 - b. Ethnic (a member of an ethnic minority)
 - c. Multiethnic (relating to or constituting several ethnic groups)?
10. What ethnic/nationality group or groups do you minister to?

Please share your thoughts on a separate sheet and attach it to your email.

Questions sent to participants in Swahili

I. Jina .._____Kikabila_____umri_____

II. Umekuwa mchungaji kwa muda gani katika COGOP? _____kanisa la sasa? _____

III. Kwamaoniyako,nisababuyaukuajiwa Kanisala Amerikana Mkoawetukwachanya, chanyaauhasi? Nakwanini?

IV. Je,unaonatofautikatikaukuajiwa kutaniko lawahamiajina kukuakwakutaniko laAmerika, na kama ni hivyo unadhani ni tofauti gani?

V. Kwa maoni yako, unadhani ni nini kiungo kilichopatikana katika kanisa la Amerika ambalo linasaidia au kuumiza ukuaji wake?

VI. Kwamaoniyako,unadhanininikiungokatikakanisala uhamiaji ambayoni kusaidia au kuumiza ukuaji wake?

VII. Ni nini kinachoweza kupatikana kutoka kwa DNA au kikundi ambacho kinaweza kuwa na manufaa kwa kila mmoja?

VIII. Tunaweza kufanya nini ili kusaidia kanisa la wahamiaji katika kazi yake katika ufalme?

IX. Tunaweza kufanya nini ili kusaidia kanisa la Marekani katika kazi yake katika ufalme?

X. Je, unazingatia huduma yako:

a. Homogeneous (sawa mbio)

b. Kikabila- (mwanachama wa wachache wa kabila)

c. au Multi-kikabila-(kuhusianana au kuundama kuundika dhaa ya kikabila)?"

XI. Ni kikundi gani au kikundi cha kitaifa au vikundi unayotumikia?

Tafadhalishiriki mawazoyako/ majibu kwenye karatasi tofauti na usanishe barua pepe yako

Questions sent to participants in Spanish

Las preguntas que se enumeran a continuación son para ayudar a determinar la salud de la Iglesia de Dios de la Profecía en Estados Unidos con enfoque en la región Midwest/Rocky Mtn.

Gracias por su participación y sus respuestas serán utilizadas sólo como ayuda a esta tesis.

Nombre.

Etnicidad

Edad

I. ¿Cuánto hace que es pastor en el IDP? ¿ En la iglesia actual?

II. En su opinión, ¿Es el factor de crecimiento de la iglesia en América y nuestra región en positivo, estancamiento o negativo? ¿Y por qué?

III. ¿Ve usted una diferencia en el crecimiento de una congregación de inmigrantes y el crecimiento de una congregación estadounidense, y si es así, cuál cree usted que es la diferencia?

IV. En su opinión, ¿Cuál cree usted que es el ingrediente que se encuentra en la iglesia americana que está ayudando o perjudicando su crecimiento?

V. En su opinión, ¿Cuál cree usted que es el ingrediente de la iglesia inmigrante que está ayudando o perjudicando su crecimiento?

VI. ¿Qué se puede deducir del ADN de cualquier grupo que pueda ser beneficioso para cada uno?

VII. ¿Qué podemos hacer para ayudar a la iglesia inmigrante en su trabajo en el Reino?

VIII. ¿Qué podemos hacer para ayudar a la iglesia americana en su trabajo en el Reino?

IX. ¿Considera su ministerio:?

- a. Homogéneo (misma raza)
- b. Étnico-(miembro de una minoría étnica)
- c. Multiétnico-(¿En relación con o constitutivo de varios grupos étnicos)? X.

¿A qué grupo étnico/nacionalidad o grupos usted ministra?

Por favor comparta sus pensamientos/respuestas en una hoja separada y adjuntela a su correo electrónico. Y mandarla a bishopyanez@gmail.com

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